THE MESSAGE AND THE MAN

J. DODD JACKSON

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THE FOURTEENTH HARTLEY LECTURE:

The Message and the Man:

Some Essentials of Effective Preaching.

BY

J. DODD JACKSON.

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TO

THE MEMORY

OF

The Rev. James Jackson

A PRIMITIVE METHODIST PREACHER

FOR FIFTY-FIVE YEARS

AND

PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE

OF

1897

THIS BOOK IS

AFFECTIONATELY AND REVERENTLY

DEDICATED

BY

HIS SON.

"'A WORKMAN' NEEDING 'NOT TO BE ASHAMED,
RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH.'"

PREFACE.

IT would be strange, indeed, if in the procession of annual volumes of which this lecture is an unit, there did not arrive a book about preaching. The work of the preacher holds so large a place in the service and worship of God; it is, to all appearance, so essential to the accomplishment of the purposes of the Redeemer; its content and quality mean so much to the life and health of the Church; it has played—and is destined to play—so great a part in the saving of mankind, that, sooner or later, it was bound to come within the purview of this lectureship.

Now that, at last, the inevitable has happened, it may be said that the following pages have been written under the conviction that one of the greatest needs of the present day is *a pulpit revival*—a revival

which will issue in a new endeavour to realise the highest possibilities of the divinest of callings. Many of late years have wandered from the fold of the Church ; mighty is the multitude of those who have never been within her fellowship. The author is more than convinced that any attempt to claim and reclaim must, to be successful on a large scale, commence in a renaissance of Gospel preaching. With the preacher, more than with the ecclesiastic or the musician or the theologian, not to mention the Biblical critic and the religio-social worker, rests the task of solving the great problem of twentieth century Christianity. This problem is neither a critical nor a theological one, but simply that of the age-long campaign:—How shall we so commend the Christ as to draw the world to His feet ?

To this avowal, the writer would venture to add a brief personal explanation. Strongly convinced, though he is, of the soundness of the view expressed above, he did not enter willingly upon the task of this book. His brother preachers will know what it is to be captured by a text which comes uninvited

and persistently demands to be preached upon. How often such an arrest finds its subject unwilling, doubtful of his powers, afraid to be obedient to the unsought command! So came the subject of this essay to the writer thereof. For long he tried strenuously, though vainly, to make his escape to the refuge of some other topic wherein he might, less daringly, discharge the responsibilities of this lectureship. He disclaims, therefore, any presumption of which he may be accused in attempting an enterprise which some may think is outside his province or beyond his powers. This book embodies not a challenge, but a surrender!

One word more may be allowed. Surely, no one will need to be told that the "Hartley Lecture" is delivered under the auspices of the Primitive Methodist Church, or that its delivery is included in the programme of its Annual Conference. This will explain why the reader will find, here and there, in the chapters here assembled, certain denominational allusions of a historic and biographical character. Primitive Methodists will readily understand them and, we hope, discover that they add force to

argument—strength to appeal. Readers of other denominations will not find that the meaning of the writer is obscured by any one of these references. As for the principles sought to be commended and emphasised, any application they may have is not limited by denominational boundaries.

London,
June 1*st*, 1912.

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INTRODUCTION

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." —*Psalms.*

"Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country and go down into the desert."

"And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to the months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine."—*Ezekiel.*

"But the water is nought, and the *ground barren.*"—2 *Kings.*

THE MESSAGE AND THE MAN

INTRODUCTION

AMONG the many problems of a problem-ridden time the most important, as it is the most difficult, is that of the apparent arrest which has befallen the progress of Protestant Christianity in this and other lands. For a long period now, we have heard from the various churches an annually repeated story of decreases in membership, in congregations, in Sunday School scholars. We have been told, also, of a general decay of reverence for sacred things, of a growth of frivolity, a surrender of high ideals and of old faiths to the spirit of materialism which more and more, so it is said, dominates the age. That Sabbath of our youth; that attachment by families to the sanctuary which was so marked a feature of our national life; that fine old English home life and filial piety; that deep communal consciousness of God which, whether it produced personal profession of religion or not, did at least create a sense of the seriousness of life and duty and so make our people strong to labour and endure—these things, we are informed, will soon

be no more. Regarding the situation, all thoughtful men are concerned and some are panic stricken. The account given by the latter is to the effect that religion is losing its hold; that the Church is being left high and dry; that the morality of classes and masses alike shows darker signs of degeneration with the coming of each succeeding day.

Now, we are of those who, while trying to look facts in the face, endeavour, also, not to see double and to keep heart of hope. It is easy to make too much of statistics, and *very* easy, in a moment of depression, to come to conclusions concerning the state of the Church, and the life of the world, which a day of brighter and truer mood will greatly modify. There is no cause for either panic or pessimism, but there *is* cause for the asking of questions as to reasons for the condition of things, for the making of suggestions for their improvement.

And of such questions, many have been asked, questions relating to the Church, her methods, her teaching, her attitude to the world around her, to great social and moral issues. Of suggestions, too, there have been many, and many of them have been seriously received and adopted as the starting points of changes and modifications, the purpose of which has been to stay the progress of alleged decline in this field or in that. Beyond all admiration, has been the willingness to make sacrifices and put forth efforts to win back the wanderer to the fold which have been exhibited by those to whom changes are

not always the most agreeable things in the world. The unfortunate thing is that, notwithstanding all that has been done, it cannot be claimed that the problem has been solved.

Now, it is a recognition of this problem, and of the fact that all efforts so far made to find a solution and devise a remedy have failed to meet with the success which had been hoped for, that has determined our choice of a subject for this—the fourteenth Hartley Lecture. Can it be possible, that in some degree, the preaching of the preachers has been to blame for the things we mourn ?

From America we hear of a new profession which has been called into existence as a result of the fierce competition of industrial and commercial life. It is the profession of " the business doctor," and already the idea has been justified. All is not well, perhaps, with some great firm; rivals are getting ahead; profits are declining, and " the business doctor " is called in to investigate and prescribe. He goes from department to department, considering the methods pursued, checking the expenditure on this, on that, on the other. He interviews the partners, the managers, the men down through the various grades ; the books are open to him. He presents his diagnosis and writes his prescription. The "business doctor" has been at work in the churches—in *our* Church. He has looked into many things. He has made some suggestions. They have not all been foolish, but, as yet, he has not quite hit upon the very thing.

He has, however, not altogether finished his work. Why should he not come into the preacher's department, into the pulpit, into the study? Why should he not be permitted to read some of those treasured manuscripts which have been—shall we say the joy, or shall we say the discipline?—of so many congregations? Why should he not be allowed to bring paper and pencil, and, ensconced in a pew commanding full view of the rostrum, write down the thing that is true about the part *we* take in the work of saving the world? Perhaps he may find that all is well. Perhaps he may find that all is *not* quite well. If *this* should be the case, how important that we should know it. Discovery is often the starting point of improvement.

That, in view of the situation referred to, we should, each of us for himself, *consider his preaching*, is the suggestion we would make to every preaching reader of the pages to follow. We leave the figure of the "business doctor," for every illustration is of limited usefulness, which is a good thing to learn. There is but one authority capable of conducting this inquiry in such a way as inevitably to make discovery of the real truth. That authority is surely the preacher's own conscience as taught, illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit. At once we make a confession:—This lecture raises a question, but does not presume to answer it. We will be satisfied to set men asking and answering for themselves. Here is the inquiry:—*Am I, as a*

preacher, in any way to blame for the decline in Church prosperity, for the lack of conversions, for such signs and results of spiritual indifference as are to be seen on every hand? This question may pave the way for others :—Is there anything amiss with the substance of my preaching, with its methods, with its spirit? If there be weakness here or there; if it lack the true note; if it have lost strength to grip, sharpness to probe, power to heal; if, in short, it lacks aught of being the means of grace it was designed to be, can it be brought, once more, on to the right lines? Our words may be as a river refreshing the Church of God, and flowing out through the portals of the sanctuary, bearing fertility and healing to the world; they may, again, from loss of virtue, fail to enrich the waiting land. There will be living trees by the living stream. There will be barrenness where "the water is nought"!

For preaching *has* been effective and the story thereof is a story full of glory. Within the single century of our own church history what wonderful things have been done by the ministry of the Word. It must never be forgotten by those of our fellowship that the Primitive Methodist Church owes its existence to a revival of preaching. Our founders were not seceders; they were preachers. They searched the Scriptures not to find passages to hurl at theological antagonists, or so-called ecclesiastical tyrants, but to find texts for sermons to save sinners, build up saints and glorify the Saviour whom they

loved better than their own lives. These sermons they preached under the open ceiling of the skies in Summer's heat, and Autumn's storms, and Winter's snow. England had been waiting for just such preaching as these rugged men came forth in God's name to deliver, and the common people heard them gladly. Immediately succeeding our actual founders came a race of preachers who carried the glad tidings East, West, North and South, along the highways and byeways of England, gathering in the lost and folding the gathered. Some of them, we remember, and could mention them name by name but that the list is very long, and we would insist upon lingering to speak of deeds as names came forth. We must recall their triumphs, for the inspiration we will need as we pursue the task before us now.

Another thing that must never be forgotten is that, as our Church was founded by preaching, and has been built up by preaching, by preaching will it be upheld and increased, or not at all. We are forward to recognise the immense importance of other branches of service and the great part they have played in our wondrous past. The pastor carrying the message of salvation and consolation to the homes of the fallen and stricken; the teacher gathering the little ones around him Sabbath by Sabbath; the tract distributor, now, alas! too seldom seen about his work, but of great usefulness in earlier days—these and a score of differently

named toilers have laboured in the uprearing of this city of the Lord. But ever the preacher has been the leader of them all—the pioneer, the quarryman, the inspirer. The pulpit has been ever the place of direction and, still more truly, of encouragement The Church has increased with the increase of the Preacher. Shall we venture to prophesy? With his decrease shall come the decrease of the Church. No Church has ever flourished in which the power of the pulpit has declined. Primitive Methodism cannot afford to underestimate the importance of preaching. *Her very life is in it!*

So the subject of preaching is of first importance. This must be recognised by the preacher, but not by him alone. It must be recognised by the Church as well. The preacher is prone to put upon the place and work of his pulpit much the same estimate as is put upon them by his people. There is one Church in this land in which the people think little of preaching. In some great sanctuaries of that Church it is a common occurrence for the congregation to leave the building as the liturgical portion of the service comes to an end and the preacher takes his place. The preaching in that body, although it has among its ministers men who are among the pulpit princes of the age, is, speaking generally, a sorrow to all who long for the coming of the Kingdom of God. "Like priest, like people," we sometimes say. We might say with almost equal truth, "Like people, like

preacher." Are there no signs of such a belittling of preaching in our congregations as may have the effect of lowering the preacher's ideals of his labours, or, at least, of damping his enthusiasm and spoiling the joy with which his heart should always run over? Do we never hear it said that "it does not so much matter in *our* circuit whether we have a preacher or not"? Have we never been told that really the man most needed is "a visitor," or "an organiser," or "someone who can raise the wind"? "We want a sociable man," says the steward of one station. "We want a public man who will make his mark on the civic and political life of the town," say the brethren of another. We recognise that the gifts of men differ. We see that each, in his own order, may serve and build up the Kingdom of God, but to rank the business of preaching as second to any form of service; to care less for the pulpit than for the class-room, the social, the entertainment, the bazaar, is a fatal mistake. You may make the Church a successful business concern, an interesting and delightful social circle; you may make it a pleasant and intellectual society whither cultured people may resort for new ideas as to an exchange. All this you may do and care little concerning the preacher; but you can only make a strong Church rich in spiritual grace and knowledge and usefulness and power by fostering, with a care amounting to jealousy, the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God. If, therefore, out of the

problem we have named, there arises a question to be asked by the preacher concerning his preaching, there also arises, just as certainly, a question for the Church. It is a question as to whether preaching has always been allowed its chance amongst us, whether we have helped the preacher to realise his best possibilities by requiring them from him with an affectionate but strong insistence. There may even be another question :—Whether we have not sometimes actually discouraged the true preacher and sent him sorrowing away, because, forsooth, it has happened that in his devotion to the great work of his calling, he has seemed to underestimate the importance of some activities we held to be within his duty. No man can be master in everything; which is one of the lessons sorely needing to be learned by us all. There have been preachers, mighty in word and doctrine, whose hearts have been broken because of the blame thrown upon them for failing to prove themselves equally skilful as financial agents. Let the Church look well to this matter. Her preachers will probably be as great, as effective, as successful as she requires and encourages them to be!

All this, however, is by the way, though of such moment that we might well linger to lay emphasis upon emphasis. For the present we are concerned more with the preacher than with his congregation. The question we desire to put into his heart has already been indicated. The inquiry is

suggested for the use, not of one order of preachers but of all. In the denomination to which we belong only one preacher in eighteen is what is termed a minister. The question is proposed, not only for the exercising of this one brother, but of the other seventeen as well. It has been intimated to us that a book on this subject "might be of special use to our young men." Glad shall we be if this prove to be the case! But not among the younger preachers alone do we seek to initiate this searching self-examination. Possibly it may be even less needful to them than to the more mature. The most dangerous days of the preacher's career are, after all, not its earliest. In the enthusiasm which, almost always, attends his launching forth into the work there is an element of salvation from some of the perils through which he may lose his strength in years when, perhaps, that enthusiasm may have passed with the novelty which now gives glamour to his tasks. Then there is still another class whose consideration we would solicit for what we may have to say. We refer to those—and they are many—to whom, as yet, preaching is but an ambition, a dream, a prayer. Some day they hope to stand before others, as now others stand before them, to speak forth for Christ's sake the story which has so often warmed their hearts. It is a glorious ambition; the human breast can contain no higher. Will such as cherish it join with us in thinking of these things?

In order to arrive at the true answer to the

questions proposed we shall need to look in various directions. As a beginning, we must, each one of us, go faithfully over his own record, tabulating results so far as they can be ascertained. We are quite willing to admit that some of the finest consequences of preaching may not be known to the preacher, but there is always material for an estimate as to the measure of success or of failure, which has attended his efforts. Let us, therefore, go back through the years, back along the path of bygone Sabbaths. Confession? No! For that we do not ask. Our discoveries may well rest between ourselves and God.

Let us make comparisons, too, however odious comparisons may be. Other men are set within our view. There are preachers—thank God!—to whom, even in these days, success is richly given. It may be one of God's purposes that they shall be considered as examples proving the high possibilities of the holy ministry when tuned to its highest notes. Let us relentlessly bring our work into comparison with theirs. "If *he* succeeds, why do not I?" The results of such a measurement may be disappointing, disquieting, humiliating, but the path to the best has often a first mile of painful self-discoveries.

Then there were the former days of our own ministries and the ideals which in those days we cherished and have never forgotten. Let us bring out present selves alongside of what we were; let

us put the work of to-day alongside of the work of that far-off time; let us compare the dream with the fulfilment thereof. Have passing years dimmed our ardour? Have they chilled our love? Have we gathered pulpit powers, or lost them, as the days have flown over our heads? There is somewhere a story of a man who, on his fiftieth birthday, received a call from his own beardless self of thirty years before, and, when he gazed upon his strange guest, he wept for what his visitor must see. Can it be true that in point of effectiveness and real success some of us were better preachers in youth than we are now after years of study, of experience, of opportunity to wax greater in every way?

There is still another test. Here are human sin, human sorrow. Here are the perplexity of the perplexed, the fear of the fearful. Here Rachel weeps for her children. Here the widow and the fatherless cry aloud. Here are misery, crime, despair. The whole world is full of hunger and thirst, of grief and wretchedness, of shame and remorse. Let us bring our preaching into comparison with these!

Above all other means of coming to the truth, let us take our preaching back to Him who sent us forth. Let us, in His company, walk once more the roads of Judea; with Him let us stand on the shores of Galilee, the slopes of Olivet, the pavements of Zion, the heights of Calvary. Let us listen to *His* preaching and in His presence let us think of *ours*.

So let us follow the matter to the end, painful

though that end may be. It is needful that we do indeed learn the very truth; needful for the sake of *the Church*. She needs the Gospel for herself. She must eat if she would live. The times are times of hardness for the flock of God. It is necessary that a table be prepared in the wilderness. The Church needs preaching, needs the inspiration of beholding the preachers' victories. Nothing strengthens an army like a triumph. The conquests of the preacher are the salvation of the Church.

For the *world's sake* it is needful that we come at the truth. The age may not *want* preaching, but it *needs* it. Possibly it also wants it more than we suspect. It must be preaching of the right kind, however. Preaching that lacks the qualities proper to itself is worse than useless.

For our *own* sake, we preachers must come at the facts as they are. It lies before us all to give one day an account of our stewardship, and the years are swiftly passing by. Now is the time for investigation. Soon will come the hour when opportunity will be succeeded by retrospect. Men have been known to make discoveries in relation to this matter when too late; when only the possibilities of regret remained. To look back over the past and think that men have suffered in relation to eternal things as a result of our lack of zeal or of faithfulness, or from some preventable defect in our dispensing of the word, must be a sad occupation for those years when the grasshopper has become a burden. The

echo of our sermons will be in our ears at the last. That echo will be either a song of gladness to sing itself forever, or a lamentation to be soothed to sleep no more!

To be of some little service in the course of this personal and private inquiry this volume is sent out. It claims only to be a reminder of things perfectly well known, but of the sort that need repeating. Will our brethren of their charity acquit us of the charge of presumption in taking up the theme now timidly approached? Many, very many, who turn these leaves will bring to their perusal far greater ability, and knowledge, and experience than we are able to wield in their writing. A few men learn the value of wealth from the possession of it; more from a lack thereof. Nothing better teaches the value of money than the association in the learner's experience of hunger with an empty pocket. What slight qualification for the production of this book we possess has been obtained in a similar way. Some few things we have learned; some we have proved through our many mistakes; some, again, through our frequent failures. They will be found set down in the chapters yet to come.

As a general statement of the plan of our endeavour, it may be said that we will try to speak of some essentials of effective and successful preaching, essentials first in the preacher, then in the substance of his message, and, finally, in the form and manner of its presentation and delivery.

BOOK I.

THE MAN.

THEORY OF BOOK I.

To have Effective Preaching you must have the Effective Preacher. Jesus Christ first Chose and Called His men and then communicated the Substance of the Message He wished them to Declare to the World. To every Preacher it is left to speak that Message in his Own Way. The Importance of the MAN in relation to the accomplishment of the purposes of the Message is therefore obvious, and with him we begin.

What are the Essential Qualities of the Effective Preacher?

CHAPTER I.

The Designation of the Preacher.

THE preaching of the Gospel is more than a mere utterance of certain historical facts with deductions therefrom; more than a declaration of certain doctrines with their applications. It is a highly complex intellectual, moral and spiritual act. Two men may deliver the same sermon. There may be similarity of voice, of manner, of delivery, but one of these men will *preach* the sermon, the other only recite it. The difference may be almost beyond definition, yet it will be felt. At the bottom it will be found to be this:—That one man is a preacher and the other is not.

So then the man himself matters? Indeed he does, and to the extent that it is not the declaiming of what may be called a sermon that makes a man a preacher, but the *man* who, through self-expression, by being what he is, makes such an utterance preaching. *First* the preacher, *afterwards* the preaching.

And in the preacher the first essential to effectiveness and success is what we have called designation,

and designation is in part natural and in part spiritual. Natural fitness and spiritual calling, gifts, graces and a divine revelation made to his own consciousness—without these the occupation of the preacher's office, especially in the capacity of the separated ministry, can only be a perpetual misery and mortification to the so-called preacher. To those who come to him for guidance in the things of God the result of their absence may be incalculable and eternal!

And, alas! there are to be found, in the ministry of all the churches, men in whom natural and spiritual qualifications for their work are absent and have always been absent. Concerning such men but a few words, and those in reply to the reminders that we are continually receiving of the ineptitudes and inaptitudes of preachers. These things form a favourite topic with some people, to whom we will at once say, that while there may be misfits in the pulpit, probably they are there in no greater numbers than in other walks of life. We have known such misfits at the bar; in the surgery; in the shop; at the bench. The preacher's failure is of all failures the most public, and consequently more discussed than are such other examples as we have named. We have been so often told that "the fool of the family goes into the Church" that we find a natural satisfaction in pointing out that this particular fool is to be met with in every lane of life. Never a war which does not reveal his

presence in the army; never a political campaign in which we do not see him being shouldered into Imperial Parliament. Never do men talk together of their experiences of bodily suffering, as sometimes even the least morbid of us will, but some one is found to recall afflictions at the hands of the physician of little wit. The "incompetent" is everywhere and if, sometimes, he finds his way into the pulpit, those who jeer at the Church on his account have little room for scorn.

But, true as is this reply to the oft-repeated gibe to which we have referred, it is also true that nowhere does the square man in the round hole do quite as great and as lasting injury as he does from the pulpit. The *right man* for the work—*that* must be the ideal of the Church, that man and no other, whatever be the consequence in the way of offending well-to-do supporters whose dream it has been that son of theirs shall "wag his head in a pu'pit," whatever be the disappointment caused to the uninspired ambitions of callow youth or the conceit of later years. The pulpit is not for sale! The honour of standing there is not to be dispensed as a reward or allowed as a compliment. Wealth has no rights and poverty no disabilities as to the occupancy of this high place. Only the preacher must be suffered there!

And on this matter the Church must be jealous and alert. Sometimes the responsibility for the presence of the wrong man in the pulpit rests with

her rather than with the man himself. It is open to question whether the Church always regards with quite sufficient seriousness this business of putting names "upon the plan." We have known cases in which an individual has been persuaded against his own knowledge of his qualities to set out upon a career which has brought to himself nothing but failure and to the churches and congregations to which he has ministered nothing but trial. We do well to be anxious to help men into paths of Christian service, but it is needful to study the adaptation of the man for the task. To send any man into the work of preaching, either as a minister or as a lay preacher, merely to "find him something to do," in order that he may be "encouraged in the good way," as has been done in many and many an instance, is simply to prepare difficulties for some one else to face. It is not sufficient reason for aiding a man's progress to the pulpit that his ambitions run in that direction, or that his relatives wish to see him in the preacher's office. We have hinted at the possibility of giving offence, and, of course, it is not pleasant to do this, especially when, as is often the case, that offence has to be given to people whom you love and honour for their works and character and sacrifices. In this world, however, unpleasant things have to be faced, and frequently the line of least resistance leads in the end to the greater trouble. It is even more unpleasant to have to disappoint the hopes, and discourage the desire for

service, of some young aspirant whose piety and devotion you admire; but it is better to hold a man back from the very thing he longs for most than, by cowardly acquiescence in mistaken purposes, to contribute to place him in a position for which he was not born. Has this never been done? Have we never known officials vote a formal recommendation "rather than hurt the young man's mind," or "rather than estrange his parents who are such good supporters, you know," trusting, meanwhile, to Providence for a happy issue out of all their troubles? In the case of a local preacher the providential issue may be the man's own discovery, sooner or later, of his own unfitness. In the case of a candidate for the ministry some Connexional Committee sitting in some distant town "may take a stand *we* cannot take who are on the spot." These providences do not always come to pass. The brother concerned does not always discover his unfitness. He is frequently quite satisfied with himself, and remains so to the end of a career long drawn out, with a persistent contentment which would be amusing if its results were not so tragic. The Central Committee does *not* invariably "find out for itself" the facts we are afraid to communicate, and, as a consequence, the candidate goes successfully through, and in after years, as like as not, becomes a Conferential problem. Often the truest kindness lies in doing the thing hardest to do and most painful to bear, and in the doing of this thing the

sacred obligation of the church may consist. Here is a lesson that needs learning and remembering. No man becomes a preacher in Methodism except with the assent and calling of the Church. This must not be forgotten when preachers are being criticised. Do you say that such and such an one ought not to be in the pulpit? It is probably quite true, but it is also true that some Church helped him up the stair. He, poor man! is not the only person to blame for your unsatisfied hunger; your unquenched thirst; your empty pews!

But, to look at this matter of designation more in detail:—We have said that it includes natural fitness and spiritual gifts and is made manifest in a divine revelation to the consciousness of the person concerned. Of this natural fitness, it may go without saying, the gift of public speech will form a part. This should surely be regarded as indispensable, yet how often do we come across instances in which the importance of this prime essential seems to have been altogether overlooked? It is not maintained that every pulpiteer need be a Demosthenes, or that a man must possess the golden mouth of a Chrysostom before he stands up to address his fellows on the concerns of the soul. In these days orators are not numerous, and, if no man be permitted to preach who does not possess this infrequent gift, preachers will be few, while some of the greatest forces of the day will be banished from the pulpit. What *is* needed is that a man be

able to express himself in such a manner as to command and retain the attention of those to whom he speaks, and that, without outraging the just sensibilities of the hearer whom he is sent to bless, he shall be able to tell out the thing that is in him. Congregations are not generally unreasonable in their requirements; indeed, as a rule they are predisposed to indulgence, which has been well for some of us. They do not clamour for an exhibition of elocution twice every Sunday. They do not come to church demanding to hear in every preacher the wonder of his age. But they *do* ask that a man be audible; that his voice, if not melodious as a silver bell, be human; that his pronunciation, if not faultless, be distinct, and his delivery without painful hesitancy or torrential rush. Surely these requirements are reasonable enough, and it is, at least, open to question whether a man who, manifestly, can never be able to meet expectations so moderate should consider himself, or be deemed by others, as unmistakably marked out for a preacher of the word.

Along with the gift of utterance to be required in the man who is designated to the pulpit will, almost invariably, be found a mind studiously inclined. The days are gone when it was held that study for the work of preaching the Gospel involved dishonour to the Holy Spirit and unbelief concerning the promise of the divine enlightenment and guidance. The words of Paul to Timothy are

now accepted as a necessary principle of pulpit preparation. "Study to shew thyself a workman needing not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," wrote the Apostle; but it is not every man who is gifted for study. Books, to some, are irksome, and much study a weariness to the flesh. They "simply cannot do it," try as ever they may. Now we will not say that such a man can never become a preacher. We will not even say that he can never become a *great* preacher. There are some great students who read few printed books—unconscious students, you might almost call them. Again, some men arrive at great truths through intuition, and by natural endowment of words are able to express them with an artless art beyond the power of academies to teach. We must never forget that some of our greatest and most successful preachers have been "failures" at college and "hopelessly out of it" in examinations. Still, such men are exceptions, and exceptions who, in almost every instance, have, in various ways, given such proof of their exceptional endowments that there has been little danger of their lack of bookishness proving a barrier to their election for labours for which they were, from obvious evidences, designed. Notwithstanding all that may be said of these exceptional cases it should be wisely and carefully discussed whether the man who always prefers the street to the study, the crowd to the class, the newspaper to the treatise, was ever meant to spend

his life in instructing his fellows in matters that call for the deepest thoughts of men.

It is, however, quite possible that a man may have gifts of public speech, and possess a studious disposition, and still be without the *preaching mind*. Such a mind will be more sensitive to spiritual truths and influences than the average intellect. It will manifest a talent for religion, a natural interest in things that are divine and heavenly for their own sake and not merely because they are to form the themes for appointed discourses. The "delight," as well as the life work, of such a mind will be in the Law of the Lord. Its possessor will not find himself hopelessly bored by the study of theology any more than the born physician will find himself hopelessly bored by the study of physiology or anatomy or pathology or materia medica. Again, to the preaching mind spiritual vision and spiritual hearing will commonly be attended with less effort than in the case of most men ; though even the preacher will find that there are times and *times*. Spiritualism talks of its "mediums," some of whom are said to "see" while others are said to "hear." The preaching mind will be in the best sense both clair-voyant and clair-audient. Call the man a seer, if you will, and speak of preaching as prophecy, and you will describe as well as it can possibly be done the designated preacher and his work. It remains to be predicated that such a man will possess, at least, a more than

ordinary endowment of tact and aptness in dealing with men, holding keys to their consciences and their hearts. He will have some special gift of natural power to move his fellows toward the action they would rather not perform. He will abound in that precious sympathy with humanity that *feels* the truth concerning other lives which it cannot always *know*. To express our meaning in still another tabloid phrase :—The man meant for the pulpit will possess a genius for spiritual things.

In these few, incomplete lines we have indicated some of the natural gifts whose possession should be held essential to the proof of a man's designation for the preacher's vocation. Before the Church suggests this service to one of her sons she should be satisfied of the presence of these qualifications ; not, of course, as matured and perfected talents—that would be to ask the impossible—but as evidenced in signs visible to the searching eye. Before a man yields to such a suggestion, however kindly and urgently expressed, even if it only point to a place on the plan of some struggling rural circuit, he should know that nature has already in some degree fashioned the instrument for the work.

But natural endowments and indications are not —need we say ?—the whole necessity. Our fathers talked not only of "*gifts*," but also of "*graces*," and of "*fruits*" as well. The work of religion should be realised by the preacher as a personal experience and prove itself in a life accordant there-

with. It is perfectly true that every hearer ought to be as good as the preacher, but, paradoxical as the remark may appear, it is none the less true that the preacher ought to be better than those to whom he preaches. It is an absolutely sound instinct for the fitness of things—an instinct honourable to the preacher's office—which asks that he who discourses concerning the elements of piety, calling upon men to embody them in works of faith and righteousness, should prove his own possession of those elements in the same way. It was laid down of old time that "they must be clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." "Who," asks the Psalmist, "shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully."

So, before the Church sends out a man to preach let her search his life to see not only whether he is able, but, also, whether in his character and deportment grace and truth are so displayed as to give him authority in calling upon others to live the holier life. Let the Church look, too, for some signs of *whole-heartedness* in religion. Zeal must be regarded as indispensable. We have heard a Circuit Quarterly Meeting refuse to accept the recommendation of a young man for the plan because he invariably failed to attend the Sunday night prayer meeting in his own church. Would that every Quarterly Meeting had the moral and spiritual

courage to take so wise and discriminating a course! Further, when the church *has* asked a man to assume the ministry of the word, let him see to it that he take the candle of the Lord into the secret places of his heart and search diligently therein lest, in going up, he take with him that which will spoil his labours and bring dishonour upon the truth! He had better a thousand times tarry for a more perfect work of God to take place in his soul than do that!

And now comes the greatest and most vital question of all. To a man may be given gifts many and acceptable; he may have received grace for grace; he may have known deep and wonderful experiences of heavenly things, and yet it may *not* be the will of God that he shall be numbered with the preaching host. There are other noble kinds of work demanding all the qualifications already named, and his powers may be given to be expended in one of these. The preacher's designation, therefore, is never complete until the Holy Spirit has spoken in his soul the direct command of God. This must be clear and unmistakable. Personal desire and ambition so often lead men astray. "Beloved, try every spirit whether it be of God." This is a word to be followed here. If only it had always been remembered how many tragedies had been averted!

For God *does* directly call those whom He will for this office, and those whom He so calls will certainly recognise His voice. This is assumed everywhere

in the Scriptures. This is proved in the experience of the ages. How often in the Old Testament do we find the record of such a revelation? Samuel in the Temple, in the darkness and silence of the night, hears with the ears of childhood the word that invites him to his destiny. To Isaiah, "in the year that King Uzziah died," comes in the Holy Place from "a throne high and lifted up" the question, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" and he answers, "Here am I, send me." In the terms of these histories is enshrined the story of the vivid way in which the Almighty revealed His will to the conscience of men of old time. The narratives of the New Testament still further illustrate the manner of the divine compelling. How urgent His call may be, is heard in such a cry as this: "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel!" Here was a man to whom preaching was no personal ambition, no mere means of livelihood, who, indeed, "wrought with his own hands that he might not be chargeable to any." To Paul this ministry was a divine compulsion; a duty only to be escaped at the cost of spiritual peace, of the serenity of perfect obedience. In all generations this experience has been repeated. Read the life stories of those who have wrought great works with the hammer of the word, and in every such record you will certainly light upon a page upon which will be told the story of the call that could not be disobeyed. The older biographies of our

own preachers abound in accounts of how they were spoken to from on high. In those days there was little earthly advantage to be gained from the work of a Primitive Methodist preacher, itinerant or local. Persecutions were many and the labour was hard—*very hard*. Often do we read of men struggling to escape from the order which had come unto them, and only yielding at last, because, for love of Him who entreated them, they could do no other. "*Sent* by my Lord," they cried, "on you I call!"

And this clear word which came to men of old time, which has always come to the man whose work was to lie in the breaking of the bread of life —this clear word must still be regarded as essential to a perfect designation. Of course, there is but one man to whom *this* supreme indication will be apparent, the man to whom the voice has come; so that with the preacher, himself, lies the final responsibility of his presence in the pulpit—a sent, or unsent, man. Do we say that it is to ask a hard thing to insist that no one shall preach who cannot say confidently that he knows himself to have been moved of God to this place and labour? Hard, perhaps, it may seem, but "strait is the gate and narrow is the way" into this excelling service. There are many hard things in the ordinances of the Kingdom, and, perhaps, it has not been well that we have so often sought to broaden the path, to widen the gate. Possibly there might be fewer preachers

if all we have laid down were insisted upon, but there might be more power; there might be more success.

Designation made plain by gifts, graces and an inward sense of Divine election—this then is the first essential in the *man*. The recollection of this will prevent the office of the preacher from being regarded simply as a profession. When a man enters the ministry "for a living," or because, forsooth, he has social aspirations, he has taken a downward, and not an upward, step. When he comes into the work because all his nature, all his experiences, all the results of religion in his heart and life urge him on, the Lord saying "Go thou and I will be with thee," then glorious is his calling, and glorious will be his record when the day is done!

CHAPTER II.

Things to be Realised.

IT is absolutely essential to the successful preaching of the Gospel that the preacher should realise the greatness and dignity of his position; and having once come into this realisation, it is also essential to continuance in well-doing that he abide in it. In himself he may have little in which to glory, but in his calling he has much indeed.

For what is the Christian preacher? He is the very messenger of Jesus Christ to men. He belongs to an order founded and recruited by the Master Himself. First He sent out "the seventy," who probably soon returned; afterwards He sent forth "the twelve," armed with a permanent commission. When, in the ranks of this early band, a vacancy arose through the unfaithfulness of one of its members, He made choice of another. From the opened skies He arrested Saul in his journey to Damascus that he might be a chosen vessel to bear the truth to the Gentiles. From that day to this He has been calling and sending, not less really, a succession of men every one of whom might with

Paul have called himself an ambassador of the King of Kings. Of course there were preachers before the apostles and there was preaching before Pentecost. The prophets were preachers, and mighty was their proclamation of the divine message—so mighty that though addressed primarily to their contemporaries it lives and burns to-day. Later, in the period lying between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New, there were notable preachers in Israel who kept alive the Messianic hope and sought to "prepare the way of the Lord and make His paths straight." There was preaching in the synagogues in our Lord's own day, and He but observed an established custom when, "entering into the synagogue" at Nazareth, as was His practice "on the Sabbath day," "He stood up for to read," and "there was brought unto Him the book of the Prophet Esaias." He had a text that day, and He preached from it, and, if the end of His discourse was that He was thrust out of the synagogue and was like to have been put to death, it was because of the unwelcomeness of the word He spoke, and not because He had introduced a new order of service into the sanctuary of an intensely conservative people. He preached in the synagogues of Capernaum, too, "and they were astonished at His doctrine, for the word was with power." John the Baptist was a preacher who was more than a prophet, and to his preaching doubtless the Lord Himself listened more than once. "And John

began to say unto men everywhere repent." Such seems to have been the burden of his message until that hour when he suddenly found his sweetest music and cried "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Yes, there were preachers before Christ, and long previous to His coming "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching" to save them that believed. Jesus, however, gave to the order of the preacher a new institution. He put upon the lips of His servants a new message. They were to go, no longer to the children of one favoured nation only, but "out into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." From all classes did He gather the men upon whom He put this glorious burden. Here was a fisherman fresh from his toil upon the deep; here a publican newly come up from the receipt of custom; here a husbandman from distant farm or vineyard, and each was commanded to go "in My name." Each was the representative, the ambassador of the King. Each was promised His help; each the baptism through which memory was to be quickened to recall the words He had spoken —the baptism which was to explain sentences which, at the moment of their utterance, were full of perplexing and affrighting mystery to such as heard. Almost His very last words on earth concerned their mission. Then came Pentecost, the gift of power, the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the waiting company in the Upper Room. Signs and wonders filled

the hour. The word was with assurance and ran like fire among dry stubble. The multitude was pricked to the heart. Soon followed the Herodian persecution, and the preaching band was scattered abroad. As a result "they went everywhere preaching the word." So the voice of the preacher proclaiming the new faith was heard throughout the countries of Asia Minor and in learned Greece and warlike Rome, on Mars Hill where walked and taught the philosophers in the presence of the admiring and novelty-seeking sons of Athens, in the palace of the Cæsars whence ran the currents filling the arteries of the world. Westward, Eastward, all over the known earth they went, and still they preached, until, in years that seem very few, when we think of all that had to be done to make true the boast, it was said "the Christians are everywhere."

And no preacher has ever risen to any true sublimity of service and success who has not connected his own place, and his own work, with the events of this great history. He is of the same company as were Peter, Paul, John, James, Apollos. The spiritual dignity conferred upon *him*, the responsibility laid upon *his* shoulders, are of the same kind as were theirs. We stand for a doctrine of Apostolic Succession, but it is not a succession dependent upon a ceremonial ordination dispensed by a privileged and ghostly class. It is a succession of gifts, of graces, of commission, of power, of victory. The true preacher is God's messenger.

Does he stand before thousands—a man of learning, of eloquence, of far flung fame? His highest glory is not in any one of these things, but in the fact that his commission is divine. Does he plod—a poor "local brother" from mine or loom or plough or forge—along dark lanes and over wild moorlands, in order that in some distant and lowly village sanctuary he may speak to a few simple souls of heavenly things? Let him not be depressed by the toil of the journey; let him not be disheartened by the smallness of the audience. Rather let him lift up his head in humble pride that he is counted worthy to make this errand, to utter this testimony, for in the King's stead he goes, and in the King's name he speaks!

A great, good thing would it be if only the divinity of their calling could be brought home to all who minister among us—brought home, we mean, as a constantly realised truth, warming always and inspiring the hearts of our preachers and giving confidence and authority to their word. The oft-quoted prayer, "Lord, give us a good conceit of ourselves," might well be offered with some small change of terms. We do need a "good conceit" of our office. From such a conceit so many great thoughts would flow, such a sense of the importance of our task! We should hear less complaint concerning "poor appointments"; we should hear less criticism of the sermons of humble but sincere men, if preacher and people alike remembered that this commission

was given on the steps of the throne. Let the preacher think small things of the preaching office and small service will be the inevitable result, small sermons, small faithfulness, small harvests when the reaping time shall come. Let the preacher live in the great facts of his history! Let him realise—he cannot magnify—his office! This is the word we would speak into every preacher's ear throughout our Church. There would be little murmuring concerning poor sermons and forgotten appointments if only this fact could win home. We are persuaded that the cause of much of the poor and careless preaching, the preaching that is perfunctory and cold and lifeless, lies in this :—That here and there are preachers who have never realised the glory of their delegation.

Another realisation into which the preacher must come before his preaching can reach its highest possibilities, both as to quality and results; and in which he must abide if his ministry has to remain upon the heights, is that of the supreme distinction of the message he has to proclaim. It is a *divine* message which has been divinely entrusted to him for conveyance to his fellow-men. In regard to this, too, he must occupy and speak from high ground. He is not merely one among the world's many teachers, not simply one among the many speculators who come with theories first ingeniously spun by the spindles of imagination, then woven in the looms of logic. He brings not a theory but

a revelation. He is not "one of the philosophers" classified and catalogued with the rest. He is a messenger. Behind him is One who sent him; and the message is not a philosophy but a "way." It is neither a guess, nor a speculation, nor a deduction; it is God's word to men!

Now it may seem a needless thing to insist with such emphasis upon this view of the substance of true Christian preaching, a view that we hear and repeat almost every day; but it is not so needless a thing as may appear. Is it not true that some preachers condescend too much from the word given unto them? Is it not a fact that some of us fail from very wont and use to live in the thought that our message is as far above every message as the Name it reveals is "above every name"? Has the preacher never been guilty of turning aside from this theme of his to what the Apostle called "cunningly devised fables"? It seemed to him that the old story had become so well worn that, for the sake of a little novelty, which might, perhaps, attract the people who stayed away, he might turn into some subject less hackneyed than the staple stock of pulpit addresses. The reason was a very plausible one, and the preacher altogether sincere. The people *did* come to hear him, too, as they had not come concerning the other matters he had been used to expound. There was a little mild sensation, and sensation is an agreeable variant of the dulness of grey and monotonous years. Most

folks were pleased, it seemed—indeed all were pleased who were of "any real account." Many people even waxed complimentary and the preacher had hard work to keep his humility in flower. The only people who complained were those survivals of far past ages whose antediluvian notions accord so ill with the progressive spirit of our times. Of course *they* grumbled a little; said the preacher gave them less than the best, that he went to the newspapers for his subjects and to—Heaven-only-knew-where for the treatment of the "topics" so selected. They complained, too, that the only advantage of leaving the old wells was that the effervescence of the new beverage drew larger congregations of a sort to whom effervescence is everything and they even made the amazing statement that the great purpose of preaching was not, after all, to draw great congregations which might be accomp ished in association with failure as well as in association with success, but to change the hearts and lives of men and nations. They were actually so unkind as to remark that of this latter kind of work there could be little done excepting as a result of faithfulness to "the old Gospel"—a term getting, nowadays, rather out of date. They *said* this, and they claimed to prove the statement by figures they unkindly produced. The thing for the preacher to do, they contended, was the work he was *sent* to do. The greatest subjects possible to him were the subjects *given* unto him. Christ's

word, they held, was infinitely better worth repetition and interpretation than any other "word" the world had ever heard. Who shall say these critics were wrong? The preacher falls below the splendour of his high calling when he turns from the thoughts of God to the dreams of men.

Of this mistake, however, there need be little fear if in his own soul the preacher dwell upon the glory of his "treasure," the preciousness of the seed he has to sow. "Thus saith the Lord." With these words he will refresh his faith and courage what time he challenges the attention and demands the reverence of men. "God hath spoken, once have I heard this; nay twice," so he sings to his spirit as he enters into controversy with those to whom he is sent. "Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord," thus may he invite rebellious men into confidence concerning all those things that matter to the soul. To him, *even him*, God hath revealed Himself. Through the written word has He spoken directly to *his* heart and mind. To *his* prayerful inquiry and diligent searching has He made known His will, *his* mind being chosen as the organ of a revelation, honouring his devout spirit and earnest striving to know the truth. Through the varying phases of the experience of *this* messenger of His He has shown him the deep things of God and disclosed new applications of truths already known. God reveals Himself to men to-day. Let us at least allow ourselves the

joy of believing that He has no favourites; that London or New York is as dear to Him as Jerusalem; that He will, and *does* speak as certainly through the prophets of our times as through those of any far-off century in the history of the race. Of this high doctrine every new sermon ought to bring fresh proof to the preacher's own soul as well as to the people who hear the latest word from heaven through the spokesman of the skies. So the wonder grows!—*An ambassador of the King, speaking the King's own word, spoken to me by the King Himself, my heart burning within me the while He talked with me by the way, my own soul growing strong in the incoming strength of living truth warm from the lips of God!* Stand we here—each for himself? Indeed we must do so; for unless we do, abiding in this consciousness as to our calling and our work, we shall lack full furnishing for toil and accomplishment, for noble battle, for glorious victory!

And if it comes to pass that sometimes the preacher fails to realise the greatness of his position and the true distinction of his message, and that his preaching suffers loss of effectiveness as a result of such failure, it also comes to pass, not infrequently, that he fails to realise, as he should, the *great purpose his efforts are meant to serve. This* failure also must hinder his preaching of the success it should command. Behind the labours of the humblest of the preaching army lies the purpose which lay back of all God's dealing with the race, which moved Him to give

His only begotten Son; the purpose for which He who was rich and for our sakes became poor, came to earth and "was found in fashion as a man." The purpose behind the preaching of the preacher is one with the purpose behind the cross; it is, in short, that purpose of infinite love which contemplates and designs the salvation of the race. "The Son of Man is come into the world to seek and to save that which was lost." "*That which was lost!*" The meaning of this word is surely not exhausted in the application of the text to individual wanderers however great their number. The whole world "was lost," and to seek and to save the world, "from the rivers to the ends of the earth," He came—to bring back all humanity to faith, obedience, love, purity, happiness and glory.

For the attainment of the highest possibilities wrapped up in himself and his work the preacher must be possessed by this imperial design. He must *feel* that he is fighting in a campaign for world conquest—for that and no smaller end. We hear, in these days, a good deal about imperialism in politics. We are encouraged to teach this imperialism to our children, and the argument advanced in support of the advice is that the learning of the lesson will have influence on the way in which the scholar will perform the humblest tasks awaiting him in life. The Imperialist, it is said, will find himself saved by his imperialism from sordid views and actions, from all temptation

to make small personal ends the measure of his service as the days go by. Experience, alas! has hardly justified the prophecy. We have seen the well instructed and professed Imperialist display much the same infirmities and proclivities as other men. We have heard of him speaking of the British flag, that most sacred symbol of his faith and hope, which it is his high mission to plant on every shore, as an "asset"; and we have found that questions relating to dividends were not altogether alien to his proud determination to "fling the red line further yet." But there is an imperialism in religion which has a happier history. That man possesses it who thinks of every blow struck for God as a blow struck in an age-long and world-wide warfare. This imperialism *does* redeem the days, and *has* a royal and quickening effect upon the labours of all who are in bondage to its spell. Such an imperialist is no longer the servant of this denomination or that, a mere agent hunting recruits for his own little connexional "interest." He may seek to attach men to his Church, but only because that Church is part of the great confederacy of states-divine. He goes to his appointment in yonder tiny hamlet, where but few are assembling to hear him, as went out Alexander to subdue the nations to his will. It is often said, and it is a saying too often received with small approval, that the Church which does most for the support and advocacy of missions to the heathen invariably does most for

the spread of the Gospel within its own district as well. The saying, we repeat, is not always received with enthusiastic approval, but it is true nevertheless, and it is capable of easy explanation. This superior devotion to the spreading of the Gospel at home follows as a direct result of a realisation of that Gospel's all-embracing, all-conquering purpose. That purpose *must* be realised by the Church if she would get unto herself the victory. With no meaner proposals must she go into battle, or else the chariot wheels will run heavily and the young men will faint and be weary. What is true for the Church is, if possible, still more true for the preacher, for the tasks of leadership and inspiration are in his hands. He must hold firmly to the ideal of a new world wherein dwelleth righteousness. To labour for this, and no meaner dream, must be his constant and unfailing resolve.

And how are we to keep this sublime purpose of God ever in recollection, making it our own ? Ah ! here is a question ! We have all heard and assented to this grand design of infinite love. We all believe that "through the ages one increasing purpose runs." But to believe in the sense that we do not disbelieve, is *one* thing, and profoundly and constantly and vitally to realise a truth is *another*. It is so easy to forget a belief when everything around us seems to contradict the possibility of its fulfilment. The labour of the preacher is often very hard; often, in its immediate results, extremely

disappointing. The present and immediate care, the difficulty to be faced *here* and *now*, so much concern and so much, at times, depress us. So much effort must be put forth even to *keep living*, so much patience even to hold up under the burden, that it is little wonder if, at times, we forget that our strenuous struggle is in fulfilment of a great plan to eventuate in the accomplishment of an eternal purpose. If we do hold the thought it is too often only in a theoretic way. It does not *dominate* us as it should, and as it would if once it seized us by the heart. Perhaps, more than in the case of most things to be realised, it requires great grace to make the soul able to grasp it. Perhaps, again, the purpose of God seems to ask more from us than we care to give, and the fear of the sacrifice required blinds us to the glory of that purpose. As long as the preacher's programme is parochial or merely patriotic his preaching will lack the clarion note. Small conceptions of the will of God make mean service. God's intention is to reign on earth as He reigns in Heaven. Let us live in this assurance if we would help His kingdom in.

But there is still more to be realised before the preacher has grasped all the golden truth with which God would fortify and cheer him for the task he is sent out to perform. Did we say that he must come into a consciousness of the true dignity of his office? Did we point out his need to discern the true glory of his message, which is that it *alone* is

the message that is indeed from the heart of God? Did we emphasise the preacher's need of a clear view of the infinite, loving purpose behind the work he is sent to carry through? To all this he must add a clear and constant vision of the victory to come. In that vision he must live as though the music of the triumph were already falling upon his ear. There is no room in the pulpit for pessimists or pessimism. The man who thinks that the world is growing worse, and *will* grow worse, and *still* worse, moving down the slopes of inevitable perdition until the final catastrophe shall burst upon it—that man has no right to pose as a preacher of the gospel of glad tidings to men. Not so did His Master look forward to the days to come when "for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." Such a vision was not in *His* eyes when He said, 'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Failure! That is a possibility the preacher must not admit, even in secret to himself, if he would not find his strength stolen and grey hairs upon him here and there!

And in the spirit of victory he not only *must*, but *may* live. There have been darker ages than this in which the preachers have alone held up the lamp of hope. Times of apparent unfruitfulness do come, times of drought do fall upon us, but they *pass*, for silently, secretly God works on and on. Let us believe in *Him*. His are the yet uncounted years. He prepareth His ways in the darkness,

" and He will bring it to pass." In that faith alone is great, true and mighty preaching possible.

Thus, with somewhat of the seer,
Must the moral pioneer,
From the future borrow;
Clothe the waste with dreams of grain,
And on midnight's sky of rain
Paint the golden morrow.

CHAPTER III.

The Need for Certainty.

ONE of the most obvious lessons to be learned from a study of church history is a lesson teaching the necessity of the positive note in the pulpit. The great ages of Christianity have been those in which affirmation has been clear and definite and strong. The great preachers of the past have ever been positive preachers, men whose assurance concerning their message was heard in every tone of their voices, who knew in whom they had believed. Especially has this been true of those whose ministrations have been the means of great revivals of religion as seen in the awakening of zeal within the Church and the salvation of sinners. How positive were the Wesleys! How sure was Whitefield! How absolutely certain of things were the fathers of our own Church! How real to them were God and Jesus and Heaven and Hell. They were narrow, perhaps. Possibly they were often intolerant. It may have been the case that they were rather too

ready to damn every one who disagreed with them as to the interpretation of the truth of God. They may not have always displayed a sweet and brotherly reluctance to brand as a heretic any person whose creed was a little more hopeful than their own. It might possibly be shown that there is some truth in the suggestion that they were not always able to render a reason for their convictions with an intelligence and a wealth of knowledge proportionate to the strength with which they held them. But they *did* know where they were. They *could* identify themselves among theologians. They were ready with a confession of faith. This is *so*, and *this* and *this*, they could say. *That* will come to pass, and *that* and *that*, they affirmed, as if they saw it all enacted before them. The result of this strong believing was seen in the production of strong belief and, better still, of determined action in those to whom they preached; for belief is at least as infectious as doubt, as the records of spiritual movements and the biographies of religious leaders of all schools will prove. There was no theorising in those camp-meeting sermons to which the people of this land were listening a hundred years ago; no "honest doubt" in those invitations heard upon the greens of the villages and in the market-places of the towns while yet the last century was young. Here were preachers as sure of their message as they were of their own existence. Of "mental reservations" they knew nothing. They had never

even heard the term. They dealt in "wills" and "shalls"; not in "peradventures" or "maybes." They said of a thing "it is" or "it is not." They went up into such pulpits as they possessed, not to conduct a public inquiry after truth, but to declare it. They were not out in search of a gospel adapted to the needs of the age. They had found the one sure way of life adapted to this and every other time. This they cried aloud, and then lifting up their voices in song, "Turn to the Lord and seek salvation," they went marching on, while men followed enquiring with weeping eyes, "What must we do to be saved?"

Such was the preaching of our fathers, crude enough, much of it, no doubt; lacking, perhaps, many of the literary excellencies and graces of the preaching of our later days, yet mighty because of its very sureness, because of its splendid dogmatism. The complaint goes that the pulpit of our time lacks this positive note; that by word or tone the preacher conveys the impression that he is "not quite sure." It is reported that he suggests where once he proclaimed, surmises where once he declared. It is alleged that people are turning away from the churches because they can obtain no certain answer to the questions of the soul. Instead of quoting a "Yea" or a "Nay," they report replies to the effect that *probably* the answer should be "Yea," but that, as we are at present passing through "a period of transition," as all our creeds are "in the melting

pot," we must wait a little while for an absolutely categorical reply, preserving, in the meantime, an open mind and a trusting heart. For purposes of consolation, and to encourage them to this trustfulness of spirit, they are told, so they relate, that "devout men are at work upon the sacred documents;" that other men, equally devout, are reconsidering the doctrines, and that, among it all, the preacher does not worry, but, with admirable calm, waits and trusts, knowing "that in the end his position will be stronger than ever for the surrender of a few defenceless outposts." By preaching such as this possibilities are suggested which, it is said, cause more concern than comfort to the man in search of definite guidance on the most serious and vital subjects with which the mind is called upon to deal. Another statement we have heard:—That as this kind of thing is met with almost exclusively in Protestantism it works out largely to the advantage of the Roman Catholic Church. Few weeks pass by in which we do not read of this or that well-known person who has "gone over." As only the more prominent "converts" are mentioned in the press we may be sure that the number of unknown and relatively unimportant people who secede from Protestantism is much greater than is known. From one of this multitude came a little while ago an explanation of the step he had taken:—"The Roman Church knows what she believes. Her priests are positive.

I cannot risk my soul upon a theory; I want a fact!"

Now it is quite possible that this complaint is greatly an exaggeration. It is certain that many are blamed while comparatively few are guilty. It is quite possible to be too much disturbed and alarmed by criticisms of the Church and her preachers. These criticisms do not all come from the sincerest friendliness; neither are they always absolutely without bias, or invariably founded upon extensive observation. The Church at her *worst* has always been better—she always will be better—than her enemies allow. The same is true of preaching. Still it is wise to ask ourselves, when a criticism is laid against either Church or preacher, whether there may not be a grain or two of truth to the bushel of chaff. It would be a misfortune if in our contempt for this same chaff we should lose the corn hidden there. Where there is smoke it is well to remember there is always, at least, a smoulder of fire. Grant that much has been made of little, which is a weakness of the critic in every time, and that all the rumour has resulted simply from some lack of definiteness on the part of a few. Grant, also, that as the criminal is always far more talked about for his transgression than the honest man for his honesty, so the man who betrays his doubts in the pulpit is far more discussed than the ninety-and-nine sure men who go on their unsensational way according to standards

made and received from old time amongst us. Grant all this, and it will still remain to be said that the preaching of the present day, in those churches where the right of private judgment on matters of faith and doctrine is recognised, would, to make the least of it, be all the better for a more positive tone.

But how has it come to pass that there should have occurred, even in the small degree in which we admit it, a loss of the sureness which means so much in the preaching of the word of truth? The question is a large one, and to answer it fully much more than all the paper composing this book would be required. It may be that the spirit of the age is not a spirit favourable to belief. In some periods faith is glorified; in others, doubt. In these days, it might be thought from much we hear, a little scepticism is the one sure evidence of intellectuality; while steadfastness in the creed of one's youth proves the possession of a dull and narrow mind and the existence of that hopeless mental condition known as fossilisation. Ours are the days of science, and science has frightened some people terribly concerning religion, though it would almost appear that she is now beginning, in some measure, to repent, and is turning to soothe the timorous souls whom she formerly terrified. Ours are days of criticism, too, and the criticism has largely been concerned with the very writings wherein are recorded those words upon which we have relied as containing

the way of life. Some things said to have been discovered have disturbed us a little, though why they should have done so it is difficult, upon reflection, to see. We have been too prone, perhaps, to surrender ourselves to such a feeling as is natural to those anxious moments when, having called a consultant to the bedside of a sick friend, we have just uttered the request, "Now, Doctor, tell us candidly the worst." All these things would be mentioned in the long history which would be needed fully to narrate the causes of the slight slackening of faith noted here and there; but, for all the importance which would probably be ascribed to each in turn, they are not the only reasons; they are not even the chief reasons. Those, we are bold to say, are not intellectual, but moral and spiritual!

And these moral and spiritual causes of doubt in relation to eternal and divine things will emerge as we proceed to try to answer the question, which now arises, as to how we can recover that measure of certainty which we have lost, and which we must regain, with additions, if we would achieve that power in the work of preaching which is needed to turn the hearts of men towards God and goodness. Notwithstanding all that may be said as to the difficulties of the situation, we venture to think that the lines upon which confidence may be won back again are not impossible of discernment.

For, simple as the suggestion may be; lacking all

flavour of the extraordinary as it does; without novelty and confessedly old-fashioned; we have but this to commend to all who waver and doubt, to all whose voices falter as they seek to utter the mighty affirmations of the Gospel:—That the way to win again the old assurance is to come back to the source of their sublime vocation, determined, whatever may befall, there to abide all the long and trying day. "Reach hither thy finger," He said to the doubter whose faith had well-nigh died for loss of a few days' open vision, "Reach hither thy finger and behold My hands and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side and be not faithless but believing." The spirit of St. Thomas comes upon us all at times, perhaps more often in youth than age. Occasionally it comes uninvited; sometimes, alas! we open the door and bid it enter. There is but one way of escaping this spirit, and it is recorded in this old history. Surely for doubting souls in all ages was this experience of Thomas written down!

The way of certainty is the way of the extended hand. Ultimately the preacher's faith depends upon the use he makes of his own spiritual opportunities. "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." There is an intimate connection between intellectual results and moral and spiritual conditions. The surrender of the will to God is always followed by an increase of spiritual intelligence. That this is true we have seen proved

unnumbered times as lowly piety has revealed sublimities of faith and trust. Spiritual things are, and must be, spiritually discerned.

And this is not so hard to understand as may appear. A life surrendered to the will of God is of all lives the most peaceful and composed. It is lived in an atmosphere of repose. In such an atmosphere the mind has an opportunity of looking upon the great spiritual mysteries in the light proper to their contemplation and consideration. It is a life of good works too, and good works tend to establish the gospel by which they were inspired. It would not be easy—we had almost said it would be impossible—to find a man engaged in hard and constant toil for Jesus Christ who would complain that he suffers from doubt as to the truth of the faith he serves. Unbelief is not unfrequently the penalty of indolence. It might in many instances be found possible to trace the doubts of men to their slackness in the service of God.

The same spiritual laws as regulate the experience of every saint of God regulate those of the preacher. His Sabbath note will be according to his week-day living. Let him be all the week absorbed in material things only; let him seek only his own gratification, only his own wealth or pleasure or advantage; let him walk only in the lower paths, and he must not be surprised if, as he stands up upon the Sabbath, his voice be found to have lost the old ring of joyful and glorious assertion.

He must not be astonished if his grasp of heavenly mysteries and promises and provisions be slack, and if, as a result, he speaks in halting tones. If his daily walk be far from the side of his Lord, he must not wonder if other spirits find their way to his ear and fill it with whispers of doubt and fear which make his testimony hesitant and of small effect for good. We say he must not be surprised at these things. No, nor must he find the reasons for this weakening of his faith in the message itself, though that will inevitably be the chief temptation of such dangerous hours. He should ask first concerning the life he is living, whether it is of a sort to make faith an easy thing. He should ask concerning his personal observance of the Master's counsel of prayer and self-denial and cross-bearing. It is pleasanter, no doubt, to seek the reasons for one's unbelief in intellectual than in moral directions. The former method may flatter us a little; the latter is often very painful!

And yet by inquiring as to our moral condition the whole secret will often be discovered. There is also another question to ask:—If we understand the promises of our Lord, in even a slight degree, He gives to all whom He calls into the holy ministry the assurance of a Comforter who will guide them into all truth, and bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever He has said. Are we quite able, we who are afflicted with doubts which sometimes make it hard to preach, are we quite able to

say that we have honoured Him in putting His promises to the proof as we might have done? Was not one of the Master's words to us "It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak"? There was no uncertainty in the Upper Room in that glad but awful moment when the pledge of the ages was fulfilled to the children of the new and better covenant. Let us seek that experience again. Let us begin our quest at the cross, with a prayer for forgiveness, and a vow of reconsecration. Let us wait upon Him for a renewal of that divine outpouring of which He has never disappointed His chosen messengers when they have sought it at His hand, meanwhile denying themselves, taking up their cross and following Him. Let us but obtain that baptism, and all our crippling and alarming scepticisms will vanish, and the full round tone of fearless confidence return. Such a return is the need of the present hour—spiritual certainty in an age of materialism, the one sure antidote for all its cares. Thus only can come that revival of religion for which we have sighed and looked so long. Be assured that there can be no such work of grace as this unless the message of the pulpit be with definiteness and confidence. Here would the answer to many a question, the solution of many a problem be found. Hearers would be conscious of a new tone in the delivery of the weekly word. Truth would be spoken as if it were truth indeed, and in their very consciences

men would know it to be true. No longer would the way of life be pointed with trembling finger. Once again the ambassador would stand forth in all his royal glory and cry "Thus saith the Lord," and now Sinai's thunders, now Calvary's gales of grace, would give majesty and tenderness to his voice!

Such is the way back to certainty, if certainty in any of us have been lost for a little while. Yet, even as we name it, there comes again to our ears the old enquiry so often heard as an explanation of durance in Doubting Castle:—How does all this accord with the advice constantly given to men to seek to win each a creed for himself? Is it not a man's duty to make his inherited beliefs and the things which are told him the subjects of his individual inquiry and of his own personal judgment and proof? Yes; all this is true but other things are true as well.

The first of them is surely this:—That a man should have won this creed for himself before he set out to provide a creed for other people. Once more, preaching is not a public inquiry after truth but a declaration of it. The man who has not got beyond the stage of inquiry has no right to be in the pulpit at all. Some preachers are always making confessions as to their difficulties. It ought to be seen that the people do not come to hear of the preacher's difficulties, but to be helped in their own. Another thing that is true is this:—

That it is surely not the best way of winning a creed to begin by doubting the truth of *everything* in order to get at the truth of *something*, as many seem to do. Surely it is not the best way of winning a belief of one's own to conduct an inquiry with the object of finding how much is false of the things we have been taught. Why not begin with the purpose of finding out how much is true? Why not seek for confirmations as well as for contradictions? It is surely something to the credit of the things instilled into us as children that unnumbered generations of great and holy and thoughtful men have found in them their spiritual sustenance and salvation. It might have a helpful effect to ask why it should be left to you or me, so late in time as the beginning of the twentieth century, to make the discovery that the faith which has inspired "saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs," which has saved its millions, satisfying the deepest longings of the heart and the highest demands of the intellect; the faith which has inspired the purity, the benevolence, the courage and endurance of a long, long past—is only in a very limited and partial degree the truth of God. A due appreciation of the significance of history ought, it might seem, to be enough to make it appear, even to the youngest and most daring of us, an impossible thing that teaching which has produced such triumphs can be false.

Then as to this search for "a creed for himself,"

which, we are reminded, it is every man's duty to make:—It also remains to be said that for success in this pursuit, as for success in some other pursuits, an observance of spiritual laws is needful. A man should seek for his creed as *prayerfully* as he seeks for any help of which he ever finds himself in need. The path of prayer is the path of light and of truth. The mistake often made is this, that we try to find this creed without seeking the help of God. "I will be inquired of saith the Lord."

One more question:—Is the possession of this certainty consistent with progress? Are we not told to expect new light as years pass on? Has not every preacher the right to look upon himself as the possible organ of new revelations to his fellows? Even so; but light will not contradict light. As the glimmer of the dawn grows into the brilliance of the day, the rays of the sun, falling ever more brightly upon the landscape, bring more clearly into view the features which at first were dim and dreamlike. As the glory creeps over vale and hill, touching here a winding river, there a patch of vivid green, yonder a window of some distant dwelling, new points of beauty and interest are continually being revealed; but the scene, though better discerned, is still the same as first burst upon our view at the moment when the sun leaped into the firmament from behind yon eastern hill. Further revelations we may indeed look for, but they will only be new chapters

of the "old, old story," and "continuations" at that. They are for confirmation, not disturbance. God cannot contradict Himself. No one was more sure of the law-givers than the prophets; no one more in accord with the prophets than the apostles. Our Lord came not to destroy but to fulfil.

So then certainty is consistent with progress; with an attitude of receptivity toward new light. A firm belief in what the Lord told us *yesterday* is harmonious with an eagerness to hear what He may have to add to-day. It is indeed to be regarded as proof of our faith in yesterday's communication that we hearken for to-day's word. Certainty is possible to the preacher, and certainty he must have!

Yes, certainty he *must* have; for the people ask for it, and have a right to demand it from those who stand up in God's name to teach them His way. We have read of blind guides, "blind leaders of the blind." Such a leadership is that of the preacher who has no sure word to speak. For his own soul's sake the ambassador must have certainty, for what life can be more wretched than the life of a man set up to proclaim a message doubted of his own spirit. For God's sake; for the sake of the Gospel to be uttered; for the sake of the high purpose of that Gospel he must be *sure*. Without certainty there can be no truly effective and successful preaching!

CHAPTER IV.

Individuality.

ANOTHER essential quality of the effective and successful messenger of Christ is individuality. The preaching of the truth is, after all, *man's* work for the sake of man, and *the man* is needful to the completeness of the definition. It has ever been God's way to work His will and reveal Himself to mankind through members of their own race. He does not speak to the nations in a supernatural voice rolling over the land. He does not write His word across the arch of the sky in any way plainer than in that language of which the stars are syllables. It is true that everywhere the inscription of His power and Godhead may be seen; but neither in nature, nor in history, nor in human instincts does He declare Himself on the deeper needs of the soul. His way is to use men whom He calls, trains and equips. Even Jesus, Himself, came in fashion as a man, that He might speak with the speech of a man to the generations for whom He was to die. One meaning of this must surely be that true preaching derives power from the man himself as

well as from the truth expressed. In His infinite resourcefulness the Creator has made all men different. Wonderful it is, but true, there are no two men who are, in all things, each a duplicate of the other. Physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, every man is *another* man. We speak of the average man ; really there is no such being. No average can be struck which takes account of all that every man is and includes every quality and peculiarity of body, mind and spirit. Each birth is a new creation. Here comes one into the world to occupy a new point of view. He will see things with other eyes ; he will hear them with other ears. He will relate them in his own way, if only he be permitted to do so. Should he become a preacher, the message will be new in his newness. It will gather something for its commendation to the few or to the many, in that this man looks upon it from his own standpoint and expresses it in his own tongue.

It is sometimes complained that in these days the pulpit is in danger of losing that which the individuality of the preacher should bring into it, for the reason that such individuality is being improved out of existence. "There are few personalities that count nowadays," we are told. Time was when there were more. Names occur to all of us, each of which stands in our mind for someone who, as we put it, was a man of himself. All Churches have had such men ; our own was rich in

them. To-day, they tell us, we are all in real danger of becoming decorously, decently, conventionally alike. We have conceived a typical preacher and we try to approximate to our conception; a typical sermon, and we try to preach it. "He is a typical curate," "a typical Presbyterian minister," "a typical Baptist pastor," "a typical Methodist travelling preacher;" "he is a typical local"—how often we hear these expressions!

It may be well to give to this complaint at least so much consideration as to ask whether it is true. At once we may say, if it is "the truth," it is not "the *whole* truth," neither is it "nothing but the truth." There are still among us, thank God! preachers who bring the aroma of individuality into their ministrations, and are a brand of themselves. Some turn of speech, some tone of voice, some distinctive way of putting a thing, some mysterious, but unmistakable, difference of flavour they have managed to preserve, and how grateful we are when we hear or see or taste or feel it. It is like the discovery of a new flower in the woodland, of a new star in the constellation! "It's no a'thegither what he says; it's the way on't," said the old Scots woman in eulogy of her minister. We could mention little traits, which, small as they are, have been on the human side the success of ministries familiar to us all. There was a message and there was a *man*. But while the complaint is not all true, it is not for us to say that it is made without reason. It is

possible that what many a preacher needs, before the success he desires can be his, is to recover nothing more, nor less, than his own lost self. It may be that some of us present a ministry true to type, but false to our own personality.

The fact is that willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, everybody (and everything) seems to-day to be combined in a huge conspiracy to crush out the individuality of the individual. This is seen in every department of life. It is the inevitable result of all highly developed civilisation. Before society is formed the individual is everything and "one of himself." After society is formed he is one among many; sometimes even rather less than one. In the police-force men are known by numbers. In the world of industry they are described as "hands." Civilisation brings infinite advantages, and life would be impossible without it; but we have to pay the price thereof, and it is part of it that the individuality of its subjects must be subordinate to the communal interest. It will be well if, in surrendering ourselves so far as is necessary for the public good, we do not go beyond this requirement to a degree of sacrifice which involves the loss of our own individuality.

From this danger the preacher has hard work to accomplish his deliverance. It is not only the peril of social life; it exists in the Church, and the more highly organised the Church the greater the danger. Referring again to our own denomination, there

was a time, not so very far behind us, when the preacher was largely left to work out his own development. As a result, individuality had in those days every chance to assert itself. The tree grew much as it would, for there was no one to lop off a branch here, to bend one there, or to graft upon this stem a shoot from some other variety. Of course the growth was often very peculiar; luxuriant on the sunward side, starved on the northern aspect, disproportionate, maybe, though often on those curious branches fruit was abundant for those who sought. Probably *we* would train those oaks, and cedars, and apple-trees in the midst of the wood to more conventional shapes if we had them to-day. Hugh Bourne might have to overcome that habit of putting his hand before his face as he talked, and he would certainly have to use language much less lurid than he occasionally employed. William Clowes might have to abandon his practice of repeating a sentence over and over again in animated crescendo. Henry Higginson might be instructed not to lapse into impromptu rhyme in his Camp Meeting addresses. Joseph Spoor might be informed that if he wanted gymnastic exercises he must take them in private, and never by way of standing with one foot on the pulpit seat and the other on the book-board the while he illustrated, by means of a roll of bills, his conception of the trumpet call to the Last Judgment. These men and a host of others we might put into a correcter shape to-day.

Now it is not contended that gifts are not to be trained, or that it is undesirable to teach and practise a certain self-restraint. No doubt buffoonery has often masqueraded as originality; and the great results which have undoubtedly attended ministries in which extremely bad taste and irreverence have been prominent have not been in consequence of these things, but in spite of them, and by the power of a passion for souls underlying them all. "Other times, other manners," is a proverb we must not forget. That there are risks in courses of study imposed without distinction upon one and all alike cannot be denied, but abundant and convincing reasons support their adoption notwithstanding the risks. It is an old objection to ministerial colleges that they spoil able men and are unable to do much for feeble ones. We hear, often, that such and such a man "is not half the man he was when he left home to keep his terms." There may be truth in it all; but it is equally true that a polished instrument is better than a blunt one; that in the hands of a wise man every atom of knowledge means more than an atom of power. Moreover, it can never be proved that a man who comes from college to fail, would not have failed, even more terribly, without the training he there received. Again, it *can* be proved that out of our colleges have come men whose ministries have been of incalculable blessing to the Church. In the end, after all, the preservation of a man's

individuality rests with himself. The fact is that often we lack the necessary courage to be ourselves, and as a result, we give in too soon and too readily, to what appear to us to be demands to sacrifice our soleness that, thereby, we may become something higher and better than we are. In this way men degenerate into imitators and echoes. Such a man is a power and has such a manner. He moves us deeply, shows us heights we have never seen and reveals to us visions of which we have not dreamed. We are not content to appropriate his donation of truth and rest satisfied with the intellectual and moral stimulus he bestows. God did not make two of him, but *we* think there ought to be another, and we try to be he. The attempt is always a failure. The worst of it is that in our effort to be another we have ceased to be ourselves, and after such a loss what do we still possess? Perhaps the disaster comes in another way. Conventionality has certain curious notions about the pulpit, the fulfilment of which it paradoxically despises as it demands it. The preacher is expected to speak in a different voice and wear a different expression in the "sacred desk" from his voice and expression in other places. In some churches he is expected to read the Bible in a strange, archaic sort of way, pronouncing the words which appear upon its pages with a pronunciation never employed under any other circumstances. The newspaper is *read*, the psalms are *intoned*. It is a crime to be natural. All the

time men are sick of the whole fabric of artificiality, and long for that touch of nature which makes the whole world kin.

Another way of losing individuality is to allow oneself to be drowned in officialism, buried beneath its trappings, interred in its dignities. Many a man spends his life in a futile attempt to live up to some official tradition, even as he might pass his time in a family picture gallery cultivating the expression of some ancestral portrait on the wall. There is also to be remembered the possibility of a slavery to books. There is such a thing as the spell exercised by a great author through the printed page. We heard the other day of a contemporary literary man who is understood to pose as a second edition of William Shakespeare on the strength of some asserted resemblance to a bust of the poet. Certainly it cannot be on the strength of any intellectual inheritance. We could name men who have preached in a thousand times more pulpits than they have ever seen through the lips of others whom they have subdued to bondage by some famous volume. We could name the books if we cared to do so. Perhaps we could recall periods in our own life when such a spell cast its glamour over us.

To resist all these influences successfully, or, rather, to so appropriate what is good and helpful in them, which it is our duty to do, and still remain a full blooded, virile individual, will require resolution. To give due meed of homage to the great, due

recognition—and there is a certain recognition due —to the conventions of our church life—to realise the office of the preacher, to assimilate the book, to grind and polish one's gifts—to do all this, and yet be at the end of the doing of it our own natural, unaffected selves, is far from easy. It can only be done as the preacher remembers two or three things which are all too often forgotten or ignored.

And the first of these is surely this: That each and every man's individuality is a gift from God, the basal talent on which the rest are built. It was of the wisdom of God that you were born *you* and I was born *I*. Here is the one and only possession which is our very own, and which none other can share, however ready we be to barter it away for something of less value. "Do you know who I am?" said the nobleman, swelling with importance, to the boy who failed to lift his cap in the lane. "I am the Marquis." "An' does yer honour know who I am?" said the lad. "I am Patrick Murphy from the cabin by the bog." Within that ragged jacket was an inheritance which could not be measured as could land, or counted as could money, or appraised as are titles and coronets, but which was as real as any of them and more valuable than all; an inheritance to be improved, perhaps extended, ennobled, but never changed into something other than itself. Let us remember this. With all humility, it is *capital* for pulpit business that we are what we are.

And another thing is written in our experience for our reflection, and it is this :—That it was for what we were that God called us into this preaching work. *He* had discernment of natural qualities in calling even us, and counted upon them to be serviceable in His Kingdom. There is surely no need to deny our manhood, or become ashamed of this being that is " I " when *He* chose it for employment in ambassadorship. It was for what Peter was as Peter, dashing, impetuous, impatient, full of driving power and combative energy, that Jesus called him from the fishing of Galilee into the ministry of the word. It was for what John was as John, intense, clear-eyed and trustful that he, too, was called. Thomas was also called—that Thomas who found it hard to believe but easy to love, and whose faith, when once achieved, brought a whole heart's devotion to its gracious object—even he was called, not as another, but as himself. Very different from them all was Saul of Tarsus; logical, incisive, proud with the pride of ancient lineage and of high culture, descendant of armoured kings, citizen of the first of cities—he, too, was called for he, for himself, was needed. So through the ages—what contrasts we behold, what differences as between a Chrysostom and an Augustine, a Calvin and a St. Francis of Assisi, a Wesley and a Fletcher of Madeley; as between William Booth and Charles Haddon Spurgeon, called, every one of them, because he was what he was.

Then let us remember that if He chooses a man for what he is, it is because He knows that the work needs just this very man. Many tools will be called into service before the brown pebble hidden away in the blue clay beneath the South African veldt becomes the glorious star of a monarch's crown. One will tear it from its age-long concealment; another will test and prove its value; others will grind; others polish, and by others will it be set in its place of pride. Very mysterious, again, are the correspondences and affinities existing between human souls. It is very curious how one hearer will respond to an appeal which would never touch another. "There is something about him that always gets at *me*," remarked a hearer, adding, "and I cannot tell what it is, or how it does it." The "something" was individuality. Why it *did it*, was because, somewhere in the soul of the hearer was a chord tuned to some string in the preacher's nature. Such ships are reached by a given set of wireless apparatus as have their instruments tuned to that apparatus. There is something between men reminding us of this. Again, for a man's own sake it is a pity to surrender this individuality of his. For in holding on to it with grim resolve lies the only possibility of full self-realisation. Let a man cultivate himself along the line of what he is if he would come to his best and achieve any genuine success, any real happiness in life. The world is full of men who have failed, simply because they left

untrained what they *were*, to try to be what they *were not* and never could become. Nowhere is this more true than in the pulpit. Many an excellent Brown, or Jones, or Robinson has been spoiled by his attempt to become a Beecher, a Joseph Parker, an Archdeacon Farrar. Many a David, less wise than he of history, has failed against his Philistine because he discarded the sling he knew so well how to use, the smooth stones from the brook he knew so well how to aim, for the panoply and ordnance made for the greater limbs of Saul. Along one line, and one line only, was victory possible to the son of Jesse, and from that line he would not be diverted. It was a shepherd who came from the hills as a shepherd armed. It was this same shepherd with this same weapon who, resisting temptation, went out to the apparently unequal conflict from which he returned bringing the head of his adversary. This history is surely written for preachers that, for their own sake, they may be encouraged to give exercise to their own spiritual genius. Along one path alone lies, if not greatness, at least usefulness for every truly called messenger of Christ. It is along the path of faithfulness to self in the development, the polishing, the use of his own gifts in his own way.

Only one other word remains to be added:— That, as already hinted, the pew hails always with respect the man who is brave enough to be himself. Let no one imagine that he can try

to be someone else, or even that, without trying to be anyone in particular, he can surrender himself to a conventional ideal of clericalism without discovery and loss of the esteem and reverence of men and women of sense. The pew is very quick to see through disguises, be they worn never so skilfully. No voice rings true in a man's throat excepting his own. The people are sick of the cleric in the pulpit; they want the *man*. They had rather hear *you* when you are planned than any one, or anything, you may try to be.

Here then is the true originality by which the gospel is made new by every new preacher of it and by every new telling of its wondrous story. The old truths may be repeated in almost the same old words, but here and there will come a new tone, a breath of new influence, a new personal aura. Oh, for the *individual* in the pulpit, the preacher who is not an echo, but comes to relate the evangel as it has been unfolded to himself! Oh, for the brother who will bring us, not a sermon only, but *a man*—a man discovered, saved, cleansed, polished by God; improved into value and profitableness, but still a man! In these words we express one of the greatest needs of the hour, and define a quality absolutely essential to the successful and effective preacher.

CHAPTER V.

Concerning "Understanding."

"AND the preacher had understanding," so runs the ancient word, and "understanding" the preacher must have. This is only another way of saying that he must know what he is talking about. So much as this, at least, is essential in every man who comes forth to teach others.

And this proposition has reference to more matters than such as are theological or Biblical. It ought to go without saying that the preacher should know as much as he can possibly learn about the book in which is written the revelation he has to hand on to others. It ought to be equally well understood that he obtain, at least, a working knowledge of the theology of the church to which he belongs and for which he speaks. Again, it is, surely, not unreasonable to expect that he will have some acquaintance with the "evidences" on which rests his appeal to his fellows. A preacher should certainly be as well able to defend his faith as the average man is to attack it. It must be frankly recognised, of course, that it is impossible

for every preacher to be an expert on every question of Biblical criticism and interpretation that may arise. Especially is this true in a Church drawing the great majority of its preachers from classes untrained, in the ordinary sense of the word, for their work. Still, it is possible for every man among us to have an intelligent grasp of the subject upon which he discourses. It is possible, we say, and it ought to be required. With so elementary a proposition we do not even tarry for discussion, excepting to say that he who will not so far give himself to study as to secure this simple furnishing should not be surprised if the people cease to ask for his services. It was a wise word of Dr. Adam Clarke :—"Study yourself to death, and then pray yourself to life."

For the purposes of this lecture we take it for granted that every reader is already so convinced of the need just set forth that there is no need to dwell upon it. We do desire, however, to emphasise the need of that understanding which goes beyond what is particularly known as the Gospel. There is no department of life and experience which that Gospel does not cover, and, therefore, there is no one who needs to speak of so many matters as the preacher. Carlyle proposed a professorship of things in general. The pulpit within certain limits is such a chair!

It has long been the reproach of the studious class to which the preacher belongs that its

members, in their devotion to book-learning, too often remain ignorant of "life," that they live in a world of paper and print, of speculation and theory, which is seldom a faithful reflection of the real world of men and women and actual affairs. Such a man, in short, is apt to live in a world of his own—a very delightful world, it may be, intellectual, idealistic, spiritual; but not the world of every day —the world in which the vast majority of men have to spend fifty-two weeks of every year. Very delightful, too, is the type of man thus produced—charmingly learned, sweetly innocent, guileless, impracticable; walking the path of life with head in air, with eyes unseeing and ears unhearing the things that fill the thoughts of common men. Holding fellowship with the immortals, eating the bread of philosophy, doctrinaire, drinking the wine of poetry—how good would it be to live with such men if only there were nothing else to do in this old world of ours. Dreamers of dreams; watchers of the stars; spinners of speculative webs, in which they love to find themselves gloriously entangled; Rip Van Winkles asleep to the actual, so wise among books; so deliciously foolish among men and affairs —we know the type, and we do confess we love it!

But, delightful as is this kind of scholar or preacher, he is often far, very far, "out of it" in dealing with the needs and perils of those around him. That was a significant passage in the will of the South African Colossus in which, in forming a trust to

administer the scholarships he desired to found at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, he provided that a number of men of business should find places upon the board, in addition to the men of learning already nominated, as the latter were often unlearned in the ways of business. There is a statesman in this land who has lost the headship of a great party largely because of a confession that he does "not read the newspapers" and is "a child in these matters." Even political parties require something more in their chiefs than an appreciation of the subtleties of philosophic doubt. Of course there is a place in the scheme of things for this type of man; there is no doubt a use for him in certain fields of thought, and it is our good fortune that plants amongst us men who are with us, but not of us, for to our ultimate advantage may be their sublime detachment of mind. It is here simply pointed out that their place is not in the pulpit of a busy, perplexed and burdened age. Their use does not lie in inspiring men to deal with urgent practical issues. True enough, the truth they discern may be of the highest value in the matter of leading men out to the light of day; but it will be found that the lamp will generally have to be kindled and carried by other hands than his who found the wells of illuminating oil. It needs genius to make discoveries and often quite other genius to apply them. "He is a preacher to preachers," was said of one, and said truly, as many

hearers could testify. But this "preacher to preachers," as a preacher *to the people*, failed!

And the misfortune is that often, alas! it comes to pass that just such men as these *do* make the attempt to guide men through a world of which they, the preachers, know nothing. To change the figure, they make the attempt to treat by means of remedies which they have studied a little, patients whom they have not studied at all, and of whose condition, habits, history and surroundings they know next to nothing. There is much of this kind of doctoring and what is the result of it? What but the oft-repeated criticism that the sermon had small practical application to the every-day side of things? It answered no present questions, though it did, perhaps, throw light upon some period of Jewish history. It solved no present problems, though it *did* contain an interesting exegesis of a much discussed passage. It dealt with no present difficulties, though it did suggest an entertaining theory as to the authorship of such and such a psalm. It opened out no heart before its own vision. It neither created nor deepened nor satisfied a single desire. It might as well have been a disquisition on the fate of the lost ten tribes of Israel, or a treatise on the properties of the differential calculus, or a discussion of the politics of the planet Mars for any application it had to the need of any one person, young or old, in the congregation sitting there and providing that example of patience

which was the most edifying feature of the occasion. It was eloquent, learned, poetic, profound, but *it was not life.* It is because there is so much of this kind of preaching that it has come to be said that the pulpit is out of touch with the needs of men; that it is too otherworldly, and that it displays a knowledge of everything but the necessities it pretends to meet. The criticism may be exaggerated and unjust, but the contention it is meant to enforce is true. Preaching must be *life.* Preaching can only be life when the preacher has understanding!

Understanding of what? Of the human creature to be preached to and by preaching saved, ennobled and led up, through almost infinite opposition, to a glorious destiny. That human creature must be studied at first hand. It is not enough to know the heart of man according to theological classification and description. Consciously or unconsciously, the effective preacher will be first a practical psychologist and *afterwards* a theologian. If he cannot be greatly both he had better be a psychologist with small knowledge of theology than a theologian with small knowledge of psychology. He has not to speak to abstractions; not to speak to *sinners* merely, nor to *saints* as he knows them through descriptions whereof the subjects were simply types, but he has to preach to *men* and *women,* men and women who all have their individual and peculiar tastes, tendencies, likes and dislikes,

desires and passions; men and women looking at things in ways of their own, influenced by such and such prejudices, such and such hopes and fears. Every one has his own disposition, his own history, which began long e'er he came upon the earth in far-off ancestors, who bequeathed to him the inheritance of themselves to be a blessing or a curse, or, what is more frequent, both a blessing and a curse, as circumstances and free-will may decide. Here are racial instincts, tribal qualities, individual idiosyncrasies, and all to be studied with care and perseverance. The preacher may preach to five hundred people to-night, and he has so to preach as to bless them all.

The first study of the messenger, then, must be the study of men. He must specialise in human nature, and his understanding must go down into its very depths. Every addition to the volume and accuracy of his knowledge will mean addition of power and competence. Those writers who impress us most are those who understand us best. The physician who most commands our confidence and, as a consequence, does us most good is he whose description of our symptoms most nearly corresponds with our own experience, who, we reason, obviously "knows our case." Putting his finger upon the painful spot, the aching limb, he says: "Thou ailest here and here," and we feel the cure begun, for the diagnosis is nine-tenths of the treatment. Similarly when the man in the pew *feels*

that the man in the pulpit understands *him*—and he soon makes the discovery—he listens for what has yet to come. How often the true preacher hears the remark :—" Sir, your sermon was *about me* and *to me!*" That is a certificate of efficiency which may well make a preacher glad.

To attain to this understanding men must be studied in all the ways we can devise—individually and in the mass, for, strangely enough, men in the mass often look at things very differently from the manner in which the individuals, of whom the mass may be composed, would look at them when alone. In books, too, man must be studied, but more especially face to face, in constant, earnest observation. The preacher must get out and about. A recluse he cannot afford to be. Pale-faced piety cultivated in the cloister may be admirably adapted for Sunday exhibition, but is apt to prove rather ineffective when brought into active service in week-day tasks. Wisdom waits to be gathered in every place where men do congregate. Earnestly must the preacher listen in those moments —and they come to all true teachers of the things of life—when some fellow-mortal, compelled by very need, opens to him the secret chambers of his soul. Great, also, is the knowledge the preacher may win from self-dissection. Let him analyse his own heart unsparingly, his own motives and desires. His doubts and fears, his aspirations and longings are for his teaching that he may be able

the more wisely to deal with those of other men. "Commune with thine own heart and be still." There is one man whom every preacher needs more frequently to meet, and whose acquaintance he needs to cultivate to a point of greater intimacy, and that one man is himself. Know *him*, and so know his race, for he is kindred, bone of bone and flesh of flesh, with all who live. He who would explain a man to himself must first have explored the dark continent of his own soul!

And the preacher's knowledge of men must include as large a measure of information as can be acquired concerning the conditions under which their lives are spent, and which so greatly influence a man's character, and account, so largely, for what he is and does. The preacher has to be Greatheart to his hearers in relation to the temptations they are called upon to fight, and often our temptations, when not the immediate product of our own hearts, grow out of the circumstances under which our lives are lived. If, again, the temptation be not the direct result of these circumstances, it is often aided by them in the undoing of the soul. The poverty and wretchedness; the low bodily state of the slum dweller, have, at least, as much to do with making him the sot he often is as his intemperance has in bringing him to indigence and misery. Criminality, we are beginning to see, may be partly a vice, partly the result of bad economic and social laws, and partly a disease inherited with life itself

The same may be said of many forms of sin which do not, perhaps, come within the scope of the law courts of the land. Not that any conditions, or any personal history, abrogate responsibility in the evil-doer. The *final consent* lies ever with a man himself, but the conditions of his life may explain how many things came to be, and a knowledge of them may point the way to help. The physician of to-day not only feels the pulse and uses the stethoscope; he asks questions as to drainage and ventilation, as to supplies of water and of light.

Let us remember, then, that the preacher needs to be in a very considerable and general degree acquainted with the life of the world around him. He should know something about business; something about industry; something of the every-day round of those sitting before him in free seat and cushioned pew. Ignorance of the world is worse than ignorance of letters, or sciences, or arts. A preacher ought, if possible, to know something of ancient oriental manners and customs and languages; but it is infinitely more important that he know something of the actualities of his own time. History tells us of the great French lady who, hearing the people clamour for bread, remarked that surely they need not make so great a noise about bread. Was there not beef to eat? How interesting are those articles, with which our newspapers are sometimes enlivened, wherein duchesses take in hand to teach the wives of

working men how to keep house on thirty shillings a week. We have seen "A Guide to Cookery" written by a countess for the use of families of moderate means, and the book was very well worth buying if only for the sake of a little mild amusement when the spirit is in danger of growing too serious for mental health. A great chapter in humorous literature is that in which Mark Twain places on record how for a few brief but exciting days he edited an agricultural paper while the editor was, perforce, absent from his chair. Good, it is to read the answers he returned to rural inquirers who wished for counsel in relation to the difficulties of farm or garden. This kind of thing in a newspaper is ridiculous; in a cookery book or an article on domestic economy it is amusing; but in the pulpit it is disastrous.

Thus it comes to pass that while the preacher must not neglect his study, he must just as certainly not fail to learn the lessons of the home and of the street. He must talk often with his fellow-men. He must drive conversation with the workman of the city and with the master for whom he works. He must hold intercourse with the man of business as well as with the brother minister with whom it is so pleasant to chat on topics of mutual interest. He must cultivate the friendship of the ploughman as he "homeward wends his weary way." He must even condescend to little children. Men can only learn from *him* as *he* first learns from *them*.

Of course all this may mean some little sacrifice, some self-denial. The tastes of the preacher may lie in other directions. They are such pleasant company—those writers who speak to us from pages waiting to open at our touch. It may seem such a waste of good opportunity to leave the philosopher in half-calf for the society of the workman in fustian. It may mean some coming down from one's stilts, too, some forgetting of what is called "one's position." It may involve, to put it in a word, the living of a human life among human beings; still, the results will be worth the winning.

Again, an understanding of the material conditions under which life is lived, greatly helpful to the preacher as it is, is not all that is needed. The messenger must know in what direction runs the *thought* of his age. The learned and able authorities dwelling within the covers of the precious volumes upon his library shelves form an interesting and inspiring society in which it is pleasant to spend his hours. The religious people with whom the preacher mostly consorts form a more, or less, agreeable circle in which it may be pleasant to pass such time as he can spare for social enjoyment. But the world has many men and many minds. Continually the ferment of intellect goes on. Thoughts ripen into tendencies with wonderful rapidity. It is recorded of a great emperor that he was wont to disguise himself and wander at large among his people, listening to the talk of

common men. As a result he knew, even before his counsellors, how set the wind. Hence he was "beforehand" in his government. There is no rebellion that is not first a conspiracy, and no conspiracy that is not first a smouldering, and then a blazing, discontent. The preacher must hearken beneath the eaves for his people's sake. He must stand sentinel upon the tower. He must be a watchman in the night. He must put his ear to the earth that he may detect the far-off tramp of approaching foes. What is being said in a whisper to-day will be cried from every high place to-morrow, and he who listens to the whisper may be found ready to answer or explain the cry —perhaps, even, to prevent it. "As those who watch for your souls," so writes the Apostle. "*As those who watch.*" Behold the shepherd, as he tends the flock, sleeplessly gazing for the approach of lion, or wolf, or bear, or prowling Bedouin of the desert. So must the preacher sweep the horizon by day; so listen to the speaking silences of the night.

Then to all this the messenger must add an intimate knowledge of the Church, of her condition and of her needs. To know her history is well. It is knowledge from which the Christian worker of every name may derive many warnings. It will be found to contain many lessons profitable for consolation and for inspiration. It will suggest many an useful explanation of phenomena in the

church life of to-day. But the preacher must study the Church as she is in this very hour. How beat her pulses *now?* How run the currents of her life in the days that *are?* Does her faith wax, or wane? Does her love grow colder or warmer with the passing years? Is it well with her, or is it ill?

In regard to all these things our friend will have —he *must* have if he seek to feed the flock of God with food convenient—true understanding. He will know how the work of God is moving in the congregations. He will be able to distinguish between true, spiritual success and that success which is noise and show alone. He will discern the difference between the rosy flush that signifies health and the hectic spot of burning red that speaks only of disease and death. He must look *deep*. He must look *far*. He must look *constantly*. He must look *deep*, because truth lies often at the bottom of a well, and the true state of the Church is not always according to superficial signs. He must look *far*, because he is surely more than a mere denominationalist; he belongs to the Holy Catholic Church, and he must know her life in other places in order to better judge her life at home. He must look *constantly*, for "if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come he would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken up."

For the effective delivery and application of

his message, then, we insist that the preacher needs to be in touch with every aspect of the lives of those who come beneath the influence of his preaching. He must know *them*; the conditions under which they live; the thoughts upon which they feed from day to day. Oh, if only we knew more about the people, how much more could we help and bless them! There they sit before us as we speak. If only we could look down into their hearts; if only we could hear the questions asking themselves in their minds, the doubts and fears, the sad perplexities which, even within sound of our voices, darken our counsel and come between the soul and God! If only we knew the struggle maintained, the heavy burden borne, from year to year by yonder man anxiously listening to our words! Silently he comes and goes between his home and this house of prayer. He neither pines nor whines; he does not rise to put the question which needs an answer before his heart can be at peace. If we only knew—but oh! our knowledge is so small at the best. The more reason then why we should seek to make increase therein, that from the worst results of ignorance in their teachers the people may be saved!

Lest some may think that, in emphasising the importance of that understanding which is not altogether gained from books we have undervalued the work of the study, let us, in closing our chapter, describe what seems to us to be the highest

type of training for the work of the pulpit. It is the training in which the student gives to *every* means of furnishing its due and proportionate place; in which he turns to books *and* to life for the wisdom he seeks. We have spoken of the impracticable scholar, but not all men of learning have been of this order. Among the most practical of preachers; among those who have displayed the greatest knowledge of the human heart and of the times, their conditions and their problems, have been many renowned for breadth and depth of scholarship. These men were mightier, and not weaker, for their learning. They were able to apply the best of everything to the uses and necessities of the hour. They brought out of their storehouse, to quote a well-worn phrase "things new and old." So let a man be diligent at his books and diligent, everywhere, in using his eyes and ears, and so "let him go round the walls of the city and let him tell the towers thereof."

CHAPTER VI.

Passion.

THERE is a page in Tyerman's monumental "Life of George Whitefield," which illustrates, as few pages do, the quality of that essential of true and effective preaching in regard of which we are now to speak. It is that page in which are described the last hours of the great evangelist.

On Saturday morning, September 29th, 1770, being exceedingly weak and ill, but bent upon the continuance of his preaching work, Whitefield set out from Portsmouth (U.S.A.) to ride to Boston. Fifteen miles from Portsmouth, at Exeter, he was stopped and persuaded to preach. A friend said to him, "Sir, you are more fit to go to bed than to preach." "True, sir," replied Whitefield, and then, clasping his hands and looking up to heaven, he added, "Lord Jesus, I am weary in Thy work but not of it. If I have not yet finished my course, let

me go and speak for Thee once more in the fields, seal Thy truth, and come home and die." At the commencement of his discourse he was unable for some time to speak, but recovering himself he preached for two hours.

At Exeter, to pursue the story, the Rev. Jonathan Parsons, who, for twenty-four years, had been Presbyterian minister at Newbury Port, met the preacher. The two friends dined together at Captain Gilman's, and then started for Newbury Port, a few miles further on. "On arrival there," says the biographer, "Whitefield was so exhausted that he was unable to leave the boat without assistance, but in the course of the evening he recovered his spirits."

Let us give the rest of the story in the words of Mr. Tyerman :—"While Whitefield partook of an early supper, the people assembled at the front of the parsonage, and even crowded into its hall, impatient to hear a few words from the man they so greatly loved. 'I am tired,' said Whitefield, 'and must go to bed.' He took a candle and was hastening to his chamber. The sight of the people moved him ; and, pausing on the staircase, he began to speak to them. He had preached his last sermon, this was to be his last exhortation. There he stood, the crowd in the hall gazing up at him with tearful eyes, as Elisha at the ascending prophet. His voice flowed on until the candle which he held in his hand burned away and *went out in its socket!*

The next morning he was not, for God had taken him."

Now, surely, here is a picture worth the painting, if only one could catch the true spiritual significance and lesson of it all. Imagine the scene: the listening multitude crowded into the spacious entrance hall; the preacher, wearied and worn by disease, and still more by his restless and sublime labours in preaching the word in field and temple for many a wondrous year. The candle flickers and fails as the glorious voice, which has made heavenly music for tens of thousands of seeking souls, becomes weaker and weaker. The feeble flame, at last goes out, and leaves the preacher still pleading the cause of the Lord, whose face he is so soon to behold. History has no nobler scene to show in all its gathered years!

We have appropriated this story because it appears to us to hold an explanation of the meaning of the word at the head of this chapter. Possibly there has never been, in all the years of the Church, a greater preacher than this same Whitefield, and Whitefield's greatness has, to a large extent, its explanation in this, the last scene of his ministry. How many he led to God eternity alone can reveal. His spiritual descendants are numbered by multitudes as the sand on the sea-shore, the stars in the firmament, for number. When he died millions in both the old world and the new wept the going of one who to them had been the prophet of

a great deliverance. To this day the little New England village where he sleeps is the object of pious pilgrimage to numbers to whom the echo of his voice still comes across the breadth of intervening years. The secret is largely hidden in "this last scene of all." In this mighty *passion* to preach the word, a passion which neither persecution nor betrayal nor disappointment nor disease nor even the icy breath of approaching death could cool—in this lies the explanation of a ministry that shook the world!

And without this passion even Whitefield's gifts of oratory would have left no record for our reading, for it is absolutely essential to effective preaching; absolutely essential to success. Without it the choicest gifts, the profoundest learning will achieve but little. *With* it, even humble qualifications and limited scholastic equipment will accomplish—have often accomplished—great things for God and the lives of men.

And this passion for preaching will be a passion for preaching for its *own sake*. To the true preacher preaching, and everything connected with preaching, will be things in which his soul delights. He will glory in sermon making and sermon preaching more than in any of his life's other activities. It is not implied that he will always approach his task without fear, or even without shrinking, or, at times, a passing desire to shun the duty devolving upon him. There may be hours when, as he truly

realises the purpose of his work, a sense of his responsibility will so surge through his spirit as almost to unman him. Other times, again, may come, when even "nerves" may get the better of him, for every preacher worth the name has "nerves," and should thank God for them. There may be days in which, seeing as in a vision something of the mighty issues dependent upon his faithfulness, he will tremble lest he be, indeed, one of those fools who "rush in where angels fear to tread." All these experiences may be—most likely will be—his, and yet he will find in the exercise of his art, both in preparation and performance such a pleasure, and such a sense of mental exaltation, as nothing else can bring. A born artist loves to paint for painting's sake; to such an one there is something almost sacramental in the very mixing of the colours. The true sculptor hears music in the tapping of the mallet upon the chisel as he shapes the marble into grace and beauty. There is no drudgery in the calling that is yours by ordination of nature, by right of true heartfelt affection. The kind of preacher we mean would rather talk about preaching than about any other subject, providing he meet with one like-minded with himself. He is happy to the glowing point when he can discuss with some sharer of the call the latest homiletic creation of his mind or of the mind of his friend. When his creation comes to the stage of delivery he is conscious of that perfect pleasantness which is always felt by a man when

engaged in the labour which, of all others, he loves best to perform. "I'd rather preach than be King of England," he will tell you sometimes; and though, on occasion, he may have his "hard times," a form of discipline sent upon him for his soul's good, he will generally be found within a single circling of the Sun as eager as ever to return to the place of his humiliation. Many a preacher who has felt, on Sunday evening, that the only thing left for him to do was immediately to send in his resignation to the proper quarter, has, before Monday evening, known what it was to hunger again for the Sabbath's sweet return. A strange thing is this preaching madness when it possesses a man, as it often will, body, soul and spirit; which no place can satisfy save the preacher's place, no task save the preacher's task, no honour save the honour of telling men about Jesus Christ. Without it there can be no grand success. He who is not thus possessed should decline to be drawn for this duty. Of such as he there are more than enough already in the pulpit—in it, but *not at home* in it, not glad, gloriously glad, to be there—slaving to make a sermon because "in three days Sunday will be here;" taking with them at service time this so-called sermon, strong with the smell of books and of midnight oil; speaking it in pain of utterance, and delighted when the ordeal is over, with a delight most certainly shared by many who neither came to scoff nor remained to pray. Heaven help the man whom fate in the shape

of foolish friends, or parents, or mistaken church-officials has sentenced to hard labour in the pulpit; who is condemned to preach without possession of that love of preaching which makes for him in whose heart it dwells the business of declaring the Gospel the noblest and most rapturous occupation in all the great, wide world! If preparation be invariably irksome—*invariably*, we say, for all men have their moods and no mere passing spell of depression is worth more than a little special prayer; if preaching be always a pain and a cross—*always*, we say—for God may cause the chariot wheels to run heavily for reasons of His own, and the difficulty may not point to retreat, but to supplication; if preparation and preaching be invariably irksome and painful, the fact ought to make the preacher ask whether a mistake has been made in his choice, which ought to be rectified as soon as possible. The true preacher will be in love with preaching for its own sake. This love will be part of the great all-conquering passion of his life.

A "part," yes; but only a part. May we call it the human, the temperamental, dispositional part? The passion we desiderate for the present-day pulpit includes something almost infinitely higher than this. It must include *the passion for Christ.* It is the hunger to preach because Jesus Christ is the chief theme of preaching; because it is in *His* honour; because out of the fulness of the heart the mouth would speak; because the soul's deep reverence for

the Redeemer *must* extol its object. He is to be *obeyed*, too, in preaching. It is a form of service rendered to *Him*. The truth is *His* truth, "the truth as it is in Jesus," and *He* gave the command which is honoured in its publication. By this act of preaching *He* is pleased. It is an evidence of the preacher's glad surrender to *His* will. It moves others, too, to the same surrender. It extends *His* kingdom; increases the number of those who "bear *His* name and sign." It helps *Him* to see "of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." It pushes further back the bounds of *His* empire; widens the area of *His* sovereignty. It "crowns *Him* with glory and honour." So the preacher "makes his boast in the Lord," and is "glad."

Thus it can be said that all true preaching is worship, which is always the expression of awe, reverence and love. We sometimes speak of worship, *and* preaching. To the true preacher this distinction does not exist. No act in all the service is more truly an act of adoration than is the preaching of such a man, because it is the pouring out of his inmost heart's affection. With the spirit with which he prays and sings; with the spirit of the Te Deum and the Magnificat, will he preach; and out of the same emotions toward Him whom thus he serves. Such preaching is a bringing of the fruits of the mind and the spirit to the altar of sacrifice. The whole Doxology is in it!

Yes, preaching is worship. We Free Churchmen

need to emphasise this truth. Again and again have we heard the criticism that in our churches there "is much sermon and little worship." We have not only heard this criticism from the quarter whence it might be expected, but, also, sometimes even from some of our own fellowship. There is an answer to this complaint which proceeds from a misunderstanding of what true worship really is, as well as from an underestimation of the true sacredness of the preacher's work. It is this :—That preaching *is* worship when offered in the spirit of worship, and that neither song nor prayer becomes worship except upon the same condition. Further we would say that *hearing* is worship, too, when the hearer listens as in the spirit. The hearer to whom song and supplication are worship, indeed, will also make an act of adoration of his hearing of the word which is sent unto him.

Behind such preaching as this, and producing the passion out of which it will proceed, there must be high experiences of grace. Such passion can only proceed from a personal knowledge of Christ and from that full surrender which such knowledge at once brings to pass. Love has caught the preacher in the way and led him to Calvary, where his heart has been set on fire. He does but preach because he must, the Lord having done for him such mighty things. As the memory of that divine arrest on the road to Damascus abode with Paul, and so sustained a sense of the mercy of his Lord that he

could not help but preach the gospel, so the recollection of the preacher will ever linger around the glad hour when the Master met him in the path, having come down from heaven to seek and to save even him. In these remembrances has the passion of the preacher its origin and its reinforcement. It is the first fruit of a melted heart. The true preacher is—the word is not a pleasant one, but it is the only form of expression that, at the moment, occurs—the devotee. He is the slave of love to Christ.

And without this whole-souled devotion—we say again—there can be no great moving and saving preaching. Eloquence there may be, intellectualism, sublimity of conception and description, pathos—all the qualities which are needed in high public address, but something will be lacking. None can speak of a maiden as can her lover, though others may describe her with a choicer diction than he. None can speak of a child as can his mother, to whom the little life is more precious than her own and every childish way of significance and beauty. "*Lovest* thou *Me*?" said the Lord to Simon Peter on that grey morning on the sea-shore. "Lovest thou Me?" He asked again, and yet again. "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," cried the disciple, his soul aflame with a living passion never more to be extinguished or bedimmed, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." Then said the Saviour, "Feed My sheep," "Feed My lambs." Peter's

preaching hour was come now that this fire had been kindled in his soul. In that confession rang the promise of all the after years, of the ministry in Jerusalem, of his declaration of the Christ in many a heathen city, of the death he was to die in Rome. Lack this flame of affection and preaching will be a task, a penance, a weary iteration and reiteration of things so often spoken as to render them threadbare and hackneyed to the speaker. Possess this all-consuming love and preaching will be as "a song of the Well-Beloved!"

But the passion of preaching has in it another ingredient—if in this way the matter may be expressed. To be effective and successful the preacher must have in his heart the *passion of humanity*. True preaching is the supreme effort of a man burning to bless and save his fellow-men. Precious to him are the souls before him; terrible to him the thought that any one of them should come short of the salvation he has been sent to proclaim, that one life should wither and be wasted. He is "kindly affectioned" toward them. He *loves*, therefore he preaches. As long as there are souls to be warned and invited, penitents to be enlightened and led into the peace of God, hearts to be comforted, powers to be taught a better way—as long, in short, as there are men to whom his message may bring help and hope and life he cannot hold his peace. He will be "all things to all men that peradventure" he "may save some."

Now this is a harder thing—this passion for men, as that man must possess it who aspires to preach the gospel with power and full accomplishment of the purposes thereof. For the love he must feel must be a love not only for such as of themselves inspire it, but for those whose life and character are hateful. Of what is called "affinity" between the man to be loved and sought and the preacher there may be none. How can the ambassador of Jesus Christ, who has looked upon the face of the Son of Man and in that look caught a conception of humanity in its fairest beauty,—how can he be in love with men and see, as he must see, their meanness and wrong-doing? The lawyer and the preacher, it is said, see the seamy side of life, and there is no need for wonder if, as has been reported, the lawyer often becomes a cynic. The wonder is if the preacher do not become a cynic too. Seeing what he must see, knowing what he must know, how is he to preserve that longing after the souls of the very vilest which alone can sustain him in his search for them "away on the mountains cold?" *Can it really be done?*

The answer to this question is, and must be, No. It cannot be done if the preacher look at man only through his own eyes and try to love him for himself alone. It will be found impossible to love one man because we do *not* know him. It will be found even more impossible—if impossibility admit of degrees of comparison—to love another because we *do!* Our

hearts have neither power to conceive nor life to sustain an universal affection.

And yet this love of man *as man* must be realised before ever we can hope helpfully to lift up Christ and goodness for his acceptance. The secret thereof must come as came the message itself; as came our call to declare it,—through another love warming our hearts into living heat. The passion for humanity comes to the preacher as a result of his passion for Christ. His love for Christ goes beyond its divine object to all who are precious to his Lord. The worst of men is, by right of redemption, Christ's man, dear to the preacher, because bought by the blood which is more precious than silver and gold. The heathen are His inheritance and the uttermost ends of the earth are His possession. Urged, sustained and comforted by this reflection, the missionary crosses stormy seas, ready to find, if need be, a grave in a foreign land far from home and friends that, so going, he may speak to His Lord's beloved concerning His wondrous grace. Here, and here only, is the true missionary motive, the one missionary argument. We do *not* seek to save the heathen because of an eschatology which would consign them to the outer darkness. We cannot receive as true any conception of God which includes belief in a doctrine involving so terrible an injustice as that men should be eternally punished for refusing that which has never been offered for their acceptance. We think, rather, of the Lord as

robbed of the love of hearts He died to win, hearts made precious by His death, and in the passion kindled by our vision of the Master looking from His cross away over tossing seas to those far-off lands and including every son of savagery to the last moment of time in His dying petition, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." We perceive upon every soul the sign of the cross; and this sign makes every man a brother to the ends of the earth. So the preacher is lifted by his love for his Master into a love for all for whom He agonised and died.

And this, from the beginning of his preaching to its end, and in relation to all the experiences into which his labours shall bring him, must be the true preacher's way of looking at his fellow-men. The social reformer has his way, too, the politician his, the scientist his. This is the preacher's way. Each and every man is sanctified to him by the sprinkling of blood. So he, also, will bear a cross for the saving of men; so he, too, will carry the sorrows and sins of humanity. He will have a Gethsemane of his own, be led to a Calvary waiting for *him*, for every saviour of men must tread this appointed way. Every shepherd who is not an hireling "giveth his life for the sheep."

One word more. We have named the preacher's passion for his Lord. We have also named his passion for those upon whom his Lord has set the mark of His love. There is something more needed

ere the flame of passion burn with its fullest intensity. It is the passion of the dream—the dream that is not a dream excepting to those who have only heard of it by the hearing of the ear. To the preacher it will be a *vision*. It is the vision of which we have already spoken, and may speak again in pages yet to come—the vision of the divine ideal at last triumphant. In this vision the preacher must live. To lose it is despair. No one has so many disappointments as the idealist; but it is the glorious fact that no one cares about his disappointments less. Not that he does not see them, but because he sees *beyond* them. The true preacher—*he* is your incorrigible optimist. Some men form their expectations of the future out of material supplied in tables of statistics, ecclesiastical Blue Books, censuses of church attendance, returns and percentages. Not so the true preacher. He has "seen the King in His beauty and the land that is far off." Columbus like, he steers his barque toward the new world his faith has gazed upon, and, as with Columbus, the passion of the coming victory holds him, heart in tune and head erect, while others mournfully prophesy the disasters always by short-sighted people seen.

So by the power of his passion the preacher declares his message and this passion gives power to every word thereof. In that same passion is his own sustenance in all the divers contradictions that preaching may bring upon him. He needs it for

his own preservation. Often the preacher who accomplishes the most is, more than those who accomplish less, rewarded with ingratitude, misjudgment, scorn. "The carnal mind is at enmity against God, and is not reconciled to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be." This means suffering for the preacher as it meant suffering for the Lord. What can keep him in countenance among it all? Love and the passion of the vision. In these will he conquer ever! The prodigality of the younger son had long worn out the patience of the elder brother. Love kept the father waiting on and vision saw the lad's return while still he was far away. In this love and vision he went forth the door; in this love and vision he returned leading the late returning child back again to home and rest and peace and purity. The parable is for preachers as well as prodigals. Oh, for the passion, the far, far sight of this old history! They are our greatest need to-day!

Passion! How is it with us now? Have we this absolutely essential possession in our hearts, in our preaching, as we have had it aforetime, as our fathers had it? Are we so set upon giving glory to Christ that we long for the opportunity to come to speak His name in the congregation? Are we so given up to the enterprise of saving men that we rest not day nor night for very longing for their salvation? Are we so full of the sense of the triumph drawing nearer that our hearts are already

rejoicing with the joy of Harvest? These are questions for us all, and we may discover the quality of our preaching from their answers, if only we will whisper them to ourselves with faithfulness to God and men and our own souls.

BOOK II

THE MESSAGE:—
ITS ESSENTIAL NOTES

THEORY OF BOOK II.

The Effectiveness of the Message arises from the Completeness with which it Meets the Needs of Men. We believe that the Measure of the Gospel is the Measure of Man's Spiritual and Moral Necessity, and we plead for a Full Statement thereof in order that it may Prove its "Power unto Life."

What are the Essential Notes of the Message?

CHAPTER I.

The Note of Accusation.

IN a purely heathen country the first business of the preacher must naturally be concerned with the publication of the great historical facts upon which the Christian faith is based. In such a land as ours, where these facts are already the subject of common knowledge, his first service to every soul to whom he is sent is to bring home the truth of that soul's condition and necessity. It is not a pleasant task. It is not an easy one. It forms a duty from which we instinctively shrink, but no ministry is complete in which it is neglected. No ministry that is incomplete can be effective and successful.

Now an examination of the history of preaching will reveal to us that all the great preachers have been examples of faithfulness concerning, not only the softer, but also the sterner portions of their message. Before us are the Hebrew prophets. By them was Israel arraigned at the bar of God. Could anything be more fearful than the indict-

ment they laid? Kings, priests, councillors and commoners—against them all was the testimony maintained. "Art thou he that troublest Israel?" asks a conscience-stricken monarch of the seer from Mount Gilead. Troublers of Israel they were, exposing, denouncing, declaring judgment against evil doers. Such was their mission. Troublers of Israel, they were sent to be.

After the prophets, when, at last, the fulness of time began to dawn, he appeared who was to be the great herald of the Redeemer. "In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." John, too, was an accuser. Hark, how he addresses the Pharisees; how he speaks of "the axe laid at the root of the tree!" Once more did Israel hear of her rebellion and transgression. Again was the veil torn from her heart, the trappings of ceremonialism, the rags of hypocrisy. Again were men made to tremble by warning of the doom about to break. Wonderfully effective this ministry seems to have been—"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan confessing their sins." To the preacher came martyrdom, and that as the direct consequence of his faithfulness. It is dangerous to play the accuser at the foot of the throne, and for this, in the lone dungeon of Machærus, the Baptist dies, but not until He whom he

announced, and of whom the law and the prophets did speak, has lifted up His voice to preach to the nations and the ages. To the world came Jesus also as an accuser, and such accusations were His as men had never heard—accusations founded upon an infinite knowledge of mankind, on an infinite hatred of sin, on a perfect vision of the end of all wrong-doing. To convince and convict the world—for *this* first of all was He made flesh. Over the land His "Woe unto you" rang out as the thunder of a divine sentence, blanching the cheek and smiting the soul with shame and fear. For this testimony He died.

And after He had ascended up on high the apostles carried on this accusing work. Knowing "the terrors of the law" they persuaded men. As Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, Felix trembled." To him the prisoner of that memorable day spoke as the representative of outraged deity. In his voice the hardened Consul heard the echo of his own disregarded conscience, and was reminded of his "more perfect knowledge of that way" which would one day make all the deeper the blackness of his condemnation. The joints of his harness were undone.

And so in that time of beginnings was set forth for all after years on the stage of that Eastern land the pattern of Gospel preaching, and its great copyists in all subsequent generations have come

forth bearing, as their first word to men, the message of accusation. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" such has been their opening announcement. Sin is rebellion against God; such has been their all-embracing definition. "The soul that sinneth it shall die;"—this "certain fearful looking for of judgment" they have held up before mankind. "Thou art the man!" has been the constant challenge of the Christian ambassador. It would be an interesting employment to journey back across the past and listen for this note as it fell from the lips of the great preachers of bygone ages. Our own Connexional fathers, however, as the figures most familiar to our minds, may remind us how faithful the pulpit used to be in the execution of this hard task. Some of us are old enough to remember as common, a phrase which now we hear only occasionally and in the out of the way corners of our Church. It was the expression "black sermon" as descriptive of a discourse in which the sterner side of the revelation was enunciated. Such sermons in those days formed part of every preacher's armoury. They were sermons of accusation; sermons about sin; sermons diagnostic of the state of the human heart. In these discourses the sinner was assailed through the gateway of his fears. The old preachers believed there was such a place as Hell, and said so, —sometimes with a great wealth of striking, figurative language which was perhaps used less

symbolically than literally. They believed in a final and general judgment in which the dead, small and great, with such as shall be then living upon the earth, will be called to stand before the Great White Throne to give an account of the deeds done in the body. Clearly did they see this coming day and clearly did they proclaim that at any time its terrors may break upon a careless and prayerless world. Some of them gained celebrity by the vigour and colour of their descriptions. In the North of England they still speak of the sermon with which Joseph Spoor transported multitudes into the circumstances of that awful hour. Hugh Bourne, it is well known, gave himself to this kind of preaching to a degree which has made his name the more to be remembered on its account. His language was literal indeed! To our mind, at the moment of writing, returns something of the emotion with which in the days of boyhood we listened to a sermon on "The Pale Horse and his Rider" from a local preacher not long since passed to his reward. Another discourse on "The Swellings of Jordan" has been with us vividly, though forty years have flown since we heard it in a tiny chapel among the Northern hills. We can remember, too, an expression now used no more, but which we have often heard as part of the final appeal with which such sermons were wont to close. "My friends," the preacher would say, "I have cleared myself this day of your blood."

Sometimes this declaration would be followed by a challenge in which the ungodly of the congregation were called to meet the preacher, "on that day when the books shall be opened and the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed," there and then to bear witness of his guiltlessness as to their damnation. It was very terrible, no doubt, very harrowing, and often as unpleasant to listen to as to utter, but such preaching was justified by its results. Many a sinner trembled as his heart was opened before him. Many a strong man broke into cries and tears as he saw himself a rebel against divine justice and mercy. Many an one smote upon his breast in terror as the veil of the future was lifted, and he saw himself standing guilty before the last tribunal, and praying for the mountains to fall and hide him from the eyes of an angry God. In our time, however, such preaching has become a tradition. It might be centuries since it was a fashion in the land, for hardly does its echo reach our ears to-day. And concerning this fact there emerges a curious thing. Confessedly the effect of such preaching was often the offending of the hearer. It has ever been so—was so, as we have seen, with the prophets; the apostles; the Lord Himself—and yet there is complaint when accusation and warning are withheld, and that, strangely, from the very people who would probably protest the most against it. It is said, even by these very people, that nowadays *the preacher*

does not hurt; that he fails to find the conscience. The fact is, there exists in the heart of man an instinctive expectation that the messenger of God will do these things. It is one of the criticisms of to-day that sternness has died out of theology. The preacher is no longer the representative of a *judge*; no longer in God's stead the accuser of men. In every age the Church displays favouritism in her doctrinal attachments. In our time it is the doctrine of the divine Fatherhood of which the most is heard. This were well if the whole truth were told; but what manner of fatherhood is that of which we all too often hear? A fatherhood of colossal good nature, of blind, of foolish, indulgence; a conception of paternal wisdom and affection against which the conscience of the thoughtful instinctively revolts. The man in the street is not satisfied, and never will be satisfied, with a merely sentimental God. Some day, perhaps, it may be discovered that he is outside the churches, *not* because preaching, asking too much, has made him afraid, but because preaching, asking too little, has left him contemptuous.

And how has the change come to pass? Some say that the lack of the hour is a sense of sin. This sense, they tell us, has been lost as a result of our theorising about the origin of moral evil. There are some, indeed, who talk as if the tragedy of sin was not really a tragedy at all, but actually a blessing in disguise. We have been assured that the

only hope for humanity lay in a moral fall which *had* to come to pass that the race might achieve its destiny through its experience of what is only *called* "wrong-doing," and of the suffering resulting from it. Only by this rugged and shadowed road, so are we informed, can we ever come to perfection and reach the golden age for which our hearts are sighing. Others see in sin a proof that man is struggling to be better. They regard his transgression as a hopeful symptom of divine discontent. Many *do* see tragedy in it all, but the blame lies otherwhere than with the transgressor. Sin grows less terrible, but more hopeless, as they talk about heredity, as they transfer the responsibility from the criminal to his circumstances, his education, the conditions of his life or the state of society. Not a sentence of punishment but a vote of sympathy should crime evoke if all that is said along such lines be true.

But not in any one of these things, nor in all of them put together, lies the whole reason of our modern tenderness in dealing with sin. Even preaching has its fashions, and he is a bold man who dares to disregard the prevailing mode. The convention of the time may decide that it is not quite "the correct thing" to lay too much emphasis on the harder teaching of the Christian belief. Whether unpopular with the people or not, this teaching may be unpopular with the preachers. We do not speak of these unpleasant things, for why be

singular in direful prophecy? Of some preachers, to summarise, we will say that their need is a recovery of the sense of sin; of others that a deepened consciousness of every man's power to triumph over his inherited tendencies, his circumstances, his training and the temptations of his age, must precede the return of success. To others we would venture a reminder that the preacher might, perhaps, be all the better for a little more personal independence, and for the realisation that he is not responsible only to men for the manner in which his work is done, but to Him who sent him out to preach the whole message of His heart. The thing for the preacher to do is to learn the truth and tell it, even though it be bitter to the hearer and bitterer to himself; even though it make short work of social respectability and conventional religiosity, bringing the blush of shame to the cheek and setting the pulses throbbing with the fear of the lightnings of God.

Faithfulness, then, is essential to the completeness of the message—faithfulness as to the true condition of the soul and its position in the sight of God. As Samuel stood before Saul in that fateful hour when the king, having disobeyed the commandments of the Lord, had brought of the sheep and of the oxen which he should have utterly destroyed; as the prophets, the apostles, the Master alike lifted up their witness against a corrupt and stiff-necked people,

so the preacher of to-day must bear his testimony against the sins of men; must pronounce the penalties of ungodliness. A revelation of the transgression of the individual, of the lost state of every soul out of Christ, are part of the Word received from Him who sent him. This declaration must not concern the individual alone. To the age, also, he has a message of kindred truth. The pulpit is erected as a witness against the generations as they come and go. It is by the preacher that Jesus Christ speaks to successive centuries. He is the true oracle of God. Against the carelessness, the covetousness, the debauchery and corruption of the nations, God would speak through him. Against the oppression of the poor, the robbery of the widow, the exploitation of the savage; against the crimes of the empires, the Almighty, through his lips, would make His anger known. He has done so often and often. Again and again has the preacher turned back the tides of national iniquity, again and again prevented the wrongful purpose upon which a people had set its heart. The need is with us still. This warning and accusing note of sternness must be regained. To tell men of their sins and that they are lost unless God delivers them; to tell the age of its iniquities and that the sure end of national vice is national destruction—here is our work to-day.

So there needs something in the nature of a reversion to the methods of days that are no more.

Yet a *full* return to the mode of our fathers is impossible. Let this be acknowledged frankly and fully and at once. Those "black sermons" to which we listened forty years ago can never be preached again. The day has gone, at least within the area of civilisation, for painting flaming pictures of hell, for realistic and horrible descriptions of the tortures of the damned. That kind of thing has had its day and can be done no more. Preachers could not do it; hearers would not hear it. The misfortune has been that the passing of our fathers' methods has not been followed by the discovery of others in which the truth they conveyed could be expressed in forms more suitable to different times. Even the man outside the Church has left behind him the literal understanding of those old figures of speech. Few now think of heaven as our grandsires thought of it; few imagine hell as they imagined it. Yet is there still a heaven; yet is there still a hell.

And, hard as it is to write it, it is to the preaching of hell that we must return—the hell of degradation and of loss and of sure retribution. That hell is the latter state to which every path of wrong-doing leads with the inevitability of eternal law. Sin is hell in the making. Hell is sin found out, perhaps, alas, too late. This word is needed in our churches this very day.

It is needed, it was recently suggested to us, especially by our young people. With good reason

the churches are all anxious as to the young people, so many of whom, alas! show a disposition to leave the temples of their fathers. It cannot be said that the Church has not done her best along certain lines to keep the coming generation at home. Older men and women have been heard to murmur that too much has been done for the young person's sake, too many things sacrificed. Religion has been made very easy—too easy, it is said. Unpleasant demands have been kept, it is suggested, too much in the background. We all know parents who confess that their children are permitted to do things at home of which they, the parents, disapprove, lest they should go elsewhere and do worse. It is alleged that the same thing often happens in the Church for the same reason. Ah! you must be careful what you say lest you offend the young! This is an indulgent, a good-natured, a compromising time. Behind this solicitude the best reasons lie, but is there no danger to these young people in all this amiability? Is it *quite* impossible for a young man to be put in peril by our very anxiety to save him?

Yes, there *is* such a possibility. It arises when we shrink from that plainness of speech which is, after all, friendship's best service. Is it not better to offend, even to wound deeply, than to speak only the smoother things, however kindly the intent, and, so speaking, fail to produce that great renunciation, that strengthening of bands, that

strong grasp of the Eternal which alone mean safety in future years? We know that the whole question is encompassed with difficulties. It is hard to write it, but the best friends of the young are not always those preachers who are most tender concerning their feelings.

And not for the sake of the young only is this note of sternness needed. It may be recalled that, some time ago, the columns of a well-known religious weekly contained a discussion as to which are morally the most perilous years of a man's life. The conclusion reached therein was startling, but bore the test of reflection. We have generally assumed that "the dangerous years" are those of early manhood, the years that lie between leaving school and marriage. In those years the youth has probably left the Sunday School behind him, probably hangs only loosely to the Church. He feels the vigour of his young manhood stirring within him. He is drinking his first draughts of the wine of life. Restraints are being relaxed and companionships are being formed, while there is a sense of freedom almost intoxicating in its exhilaration. These are the days that we have commonly described as the most perilous of life.

Probably, however, we have been wrong in this conclusion. In the discussion referred to it was contended, perhaps established, that the period of greatest moral and spiritual danger lies a score or

more years further along the road. From forty to fifty, and nearer fifty than forty, was maintained to be the fateful age. Youth has innocence, ambition, enthusiasm, ideals. Youth has generous impulses, has not yet been soured by disappointments, has not yet found out the cynicism of the world, has not become infected by the canker of covetousness. It has made no enemies, is not corrupted by success, is not daunted by failure. A score of years later some or all of these things will have happened to a man. Harder has become the world, fiercer the battle in which he is engaged, lower burn the fires of life; enthusiasm has faded as grey hairs have come. *These* are the perilous years.

There is one thing the preacher must never forget:— That the men and women before him go in constant peril from temptation. Not of the avowedly non-Christian only is this true, but of all. Yonder man, known for his respectability, his regular attendance at the sanctuary, falters, perhaps, this very day on the crumbling edge of a moral precipice. Ever and anon some one is missed from the means of grace. Where is he? Hush! Tell it softly and with tears. He has fallen who but recently bade so fairly to carry his cross to the summit of the hill. Can it be that he fell because in the House of Prayer no voice warned him? Can it be that he has committed the greater sin because no reproof was whispered in his ear concerning the

beginnings of transgression? Was there no message committed to the preacher for that man as he drew near the parting of the ways? Did the messenger suppress the truth because it was hard to utter?

What, then, is it that is asked? Not, of course, a ministry of continual denunciation, of constant reproach, of endless accusation—not that, but a ministry in which the witness shall be not one-sided but complete. Let us hear, if you please, of the sweeter things; tell us again, *and again*, of that divine Fatherhood in which must be our final trust; whisper in our ears of the gentleness of God and the infinite tenderness of His Son; but tell us *all*, for so wayward are we, so presumptuous, so prone to go astray that we need to hear of chastisement as well as mercy. We must be reminded that "the way of transgressors is hard" as well as of the blessing that the Lord has in His heart for us.

To the preacher, then, we would say:—Here is a task which must not be neglected however hard it be. The word should be a hammer to break, a sword to pierce, an arrow in the heart. Here is something for us all to do:—To cultivate the arts of the counsel for the prosecution. In the exercise of those arts all our knowledge of human nature, all possible learning in the word will be needed to their very last syllable. It is not true that any one is qualified to wave the lamp that shall reveal the pitfall in the path of the over-confident disciple. He must be a wise physician who has to diagnose

the sickness of the soul. He must be a lawyer learned in the law who has to explain the position of the rebel before his flouted Sovereign. He must have larger skill than most who has to bring home the broken will of God to the soul. A reflection, more important still, has yet to be suggested. For this work the preacher will need to be a man of holiness, for, though he speak to his brother only as a fellow-sinner saved by Grace, he must speak as one who has escaped from bonds. Thus comes character into the business. "Woe is me," said the prophet, called to witness against the transgression of Judah, "for I am a man of unclean lips." Only by prayer, by the cleansing of the fountain, by sustaining grace shall we be sufficient for these things. For this manner of preaching one man alone can ascend into the hill of the Lord :—"He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, and hath not lifted up himself unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."

CHAPTER II.

The Note of Pity.

IN the chapter just concluded we have tried to lay down that one essential of the preacher's message is the note of sternness, that the preacher is, on God's behalf, the accuser of his hearers, charging them before the bar of conscience, declaring to the soul its state and condition, pronouncing, also, the punishment which must follow persistent rebellion against God. It becomes us immediately to say something as to another note which must be heard in unison with this of sternness, and that is the note of pity. It is time to insist upon this. Only that man can declare the terrors of the law who knows something of the spirit of the prophet who cried, "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Only he can cry out against Jerusalem who, when he beholds the city, weeps over it as he sees its crime and shame and notes the tempest gathering to burst over its "cloud-capp'd towers, its solemn temples, its airy palaces." The preacher,

like his Lord, must be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." It must be true of *him* that for "the hurt of the daughter of My people was He stricken." His heart must have bled for the tragedy of the world!

And into the delivery of the message this pity must find its way and have expression, if not always in word, certainly in tone. In tone, we say, for the tone of the preacher's utterance is almost, if not quite, as important as its words. Lacking the accent of pity, the accusations of the preacher will degenerate into scolding, and of all scolds the pulpit scold is the most objectionable. Without a pitiful heart his exposure of human nature will become mere fault-finding, and a fault-finding ministry is a ministry of desolation. Again, without a pitiful heart the preacher's utterance of the divine judgment will be but more or less terrifying threats, and the pulpit is not set up to threaten but to pronounce. We have heard preaching of this order. "I am not at all well to-night," said a clergyman of whom we once read, "and I shall give it 'em hot." Men are sometimes reminded of their sins, not out of a sense of duty borne in upon a reluctant spirit, but because the wind happens to be in the east, or the preacher's nerves are badly out of order. The Church is told of her coldness, her indolence and unfaithfulness, her narrowness, bigotry and greed, not because, after a struggle to win permission to tell a more flattering tale, the preacher comes forth

under a divine compulsion to "cry aloud and spare not," but because his digestion is upset, or his temporal concerns are awry, or even because his personal ambitions have been disappointed and himself unappreciated. There is such a thing as bad-tempered, ill-natured preaching, in which the weapons of the Bible armoury are borrowed for the expression of the preacher's chagrin and spite. In a literal sense every word he speaks may be true, but the spirit of the message destroys all possible good effects and turns the word of God into an angry snarl. It might, therefore, be well to decide to preach along lines of accusation, exposure, judgment or warning only on those days when the heart is happiest, when life goes well and the cheek of health glows with its brightest bloom. Perhaps the resolution might take such a form as this :— *Resolved : Never to preach a hard sermon when I feel like doing so.*

All this is no fancy picture, and the peril indicated is not imaginary but real. The story of Jonah is left to all time for the warning of the preacher. Seated yonder in his booth, biting his nails in vexation, he is the type of the preacher whose righteous indignation, because of its lack of that element of unselfishness, and that spirit of pity by which moral anger should always be qualified, becomes simply grim and merciless wrath. "Doest thou well to be angry ? " the eternal voice asks of him and of all who follow in his prophetic line. It was not

thus that Jesus looked upon the multitude. They despised Him—many of them. That He knew. They accused and slandered Him one to another and in their own secret hearts. Some of them said He was a glutton and a wine-bibber, others that He had a devil, others, again, that He was the friend of publicans and sinners. They ate His bread, accepted His healing kindness, and all the time were making ready to cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas," when opportunity should arise. All this He understood, but "when He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd."

"All His words are music,
Though they make me weep,
Infinitely tender,
Infinitely deep."

And the absence of this undertone of pity from the message of the preacher always destroys the effect of his warnings and causes the hearer to be less afraid than angry, as is always the case when men are captiously scolded and found fault with and threatened. On the other hand, its presence gives power and penetration to the terrors borne upon its breath. It is instinctively felt that the hard words of the preacher are spoken as by one who weeps before he speaks. He does but speak because he must, because it would be cruellest

cruelty to be silent. "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace." "Zion's sake"—here, then, is the motive of all this unfolding of the secret history of the hearer's heart and life. From very pity this man cannot speak of health when he sees the canker in the rose which blooms upon the cheek, when he perceives that, despite the appearance of strength and vigour, "the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint." He has not told us pleasant things to-day, though we would have liked to hear them, and he would have been glad to tell them, because he is too deeply concerned for us to prophesy golden groves at the end of a journey whose every footstep is taken upon the broad road leading to destruction. With meekness can we receive the reproofs of a parent knowing that, however hard his word, his heart is tender. "Whom He loveth He chasteneth," was written of the Lord. When it can be written of the Lord's ambassador, then again it will be true that although "no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous," yet will it yield "the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Let us take it, then, that pity is an essential of the preacher's message, and must make its presence felt, if not in word, at least in accent, or tone, or atmosphere. Is it too late in the argument to ask what this pity really and truly is?

In Theodore Munger's volume, "The Freedom of Faith," a book which will be found in many of our

libraries, there is a chapter on the pity of Jesus Christ which would probably repay us for another perusal. Very powerfully the author maintains that pity is a deeper and sublimer passion than love. In "The Alchemist," Balzac, depicting an ideally perfect affection makes the object of it deformed, indicating that love has not attained its highest height until it has become pity. Thus the mother's love for her child is never so noble as when expressed in ministering to its sickness. How near to the little one does she come in those painful, anxious hours when, perchance, all the reward her love seems like to bring is the blighting of her dearest hopes. She loves her child in health, but that love is rewarded with joy; she loves it as it triumphs in its little tasks of intellect, but that love is rewarded with pride; its moral achievements awaken her admiration; its spiritual victories arouse her gratitude, and in admiration and gratitude, love has compensation; but none of these emotions so carry over her soul into fellowship with the soul of that dear one, none bring her into a touch so close, or give such gentleness to the fingers, such softness and tenderness to the voice as does pity, "when pain and sickness wring the brow." And what of the parental feeling for that other child—the child, we mean, whose name no one speaks in her ear, who has gone out from the family circle, who is away in the far country, wasting his substance in riotous living; who, indeed, *has* wasted it, and who is now feeding

the swine of the stranger, and longing to fill his belly with the husks that the swine do eat? Behold, now, the father standing upon the threshold shading his eyes as longingly he gazes along the road which climbs the distant hill. A world of trouble is in his eyes. "Yonder young fool who has wandered away is not worth a single sigh of this grand old man," we say. "He is reaping as he has sown," we moralise. Time was when this youth went brightly to and fro in the homestead, when innocence sat throned upon his forehead, when truth shone brightly from his eyes, when purity and modesty mantled with blushes his boyish cheek. The old man loved him *then*. But this watching from the threshold, this long, long tearful look down the road winding away to the land of profligacy and shame, these are the glories of his love. Here is *pity*. This is affection glowing in its fairest flower, its most precious fruit. Before us is a dim adumbration of the pity of God, the highest manifestation of His love for man. Similarly the pity of man for man is the highest manifestation of our love one for another. It is by pity, and by pity only, that humanity can be brought into true unity. It is by pity that the preacher comes into oneness with his congregation. There is a sense in which he comes nearer to his hearers through their sufferings and their sins than through their joys and their virtues, for suffering and sin give occasion for compassion. Only let the man in the pulpit feel

this emotion toward the man in the pew; only let the tragedy of his wrong-doing, the poverty of his soul resultant from his neglect of higher things, the awful fact that he is without God and hope in the world come home to the preacher's heart; only let the shadow of this man's fate cast its darkness upon the preacher's soul and oh! how precious does that man become, sinner though he be. Let the man in the pew but feel that the heart of the man in the pulpit is almost breaking for the longing it has toward him and how differently will he receive the reproof that man may bring; with what new reverence will he attend to the solemn warning he may utter. At last *a brother* seeks his soul!

For another result of pity will be that the Gospel of reconciliation will be preached indeed. If from the compulsion of compassion the preacher declared the terrors of the law, from the same divine concern he will glory to declare the way of return, the counsel and invitation of mercy. Even as none but a pitiful man can declare the words of the law so only a pitiful man can declare the provisions and conditions of the Cross. If the words of the Law, without pity are mere scolding and fault-finding and threatening, the words of the Gospel without pity must be cold, perfunctory and lifeless. Calvary was the expression of infinite compassion. In its own spirit alone can its message be set forth. You may preach even the justice of God in such a way as to make His judgments seem full of the kindest intention to the

heart. On the other hand, you may preach the sacrifice of love in such a manner as to make the story hard as judgment thunders. You may throw a pardon at a man in such a fashion as to make the forgiveness it expresses more bitter than a curse.

But how are we so to abound in pity as to be able, at all times, to fill our message with its gracious influence, for pity is not always easy, in which fact is one element of its high nobility? The sins of men, their vices with their results in life and character, often make it hard to pity them. A horrible thing is sin, and so horrible its effects that it seems, at times, almost impossible to look upon those in whom these effects are evident with any emotions save those of loathing and disgust. It was no very natural thing for Jonah to look with any sort of tenderness on that great, debauched, besotted Nineveh, reeking in its vileness, foul with the accumulated moral filth of many generations. Out of a man's own righteousness, too, his jealousy for God and his reverence for goodness, there may grow a certain hardness and, from very loyalty to God, it may not be easy to look with compassionate eyes upon the transgressor. We cannot but remember that every blessed purpose of the Kingdom is delayed by sin. By this black impediment every golden dream of devout saints, of moral and spiritual reformers is held back from happy fulfilment. It is difficult, indeed, to feel pitiful when the heart for Christ's sake is longing to behold the glories He died

to bring to pass and sees those glories thus wantonly postponed. Yes, the note of pity is often hard to strike. The more we think of all that is involved the more emphasis we throw into the question—*how has it to be done?*

The truth is that pity for such a service needs to be earnestly and constantly cultivated. It only follows as the result of spiritual processes in the preacher's own soul. It is not the mere outflowing of a natural kindliness of disposition, of inborn good nature. It is more than mere sloppy sentimentality. *That* kind of pity, if you may call it by such a name, never tells the truth excepting when it is pleasant, never preaches a sermon of rebuke, never reasons concerning "judgment to come." There is no such word as Hell in its vocabulary; there is no accusation in its programme. The pity we mean blazes up into moral anger, smites and wounds, and compassionates the while. *This* pity requires cultivation. Quoting an old phrase, "it never grew in Nature's garden." An understanding of men is absolutely essential to attainment herein. Some one has said that "if we knew all we would pity all." God *does* know all and *does* pity all. The compassion of Jesus was aided by His knowledge of the multitude; so must ours be. It is a terrible story—this story of transgression—but those who know it best water it with tears. Nothing is served by closing our eyes to facts, though the temptation is great to exercise the mistaken charity of declining to know. Is there

no danger of a cowardly refusal of vision, of making the fellowship of saints a hiding place whither we can escape from the sights and shames of the world? Are we quite guiltless of seeking in the Christian Society a forgetfulness of the things that wither and blast human souls without? Do none of us make of the Church "a little garden walled around," where the sound of crying and of cursing breaks not upon our peace as we dream our happy dreams? We are sent to look steadfastly upon the sore, to behold and analyse the very truth, for it is in the measure in which our souls are pierced that we compassionate.

But the greatest school for the learning of pitifulness is yonder at the feet of Jesus. In His company hearts grow hard to sin and tender to sinners. "Is there any sorrow like unto My sorrow?" He cries, and we know that His sorrow was not for Himself, but for those who spurned Him. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," He prays, and, lo! the cry is for His very murderers, and the music of it melts our spirit toward the transgressor while the transgression becomes more hateful in our eyes. Where do you abhor sin as you abhor it upon the slopes of Calvary? Where do you pity sinners as you pity them there? There is the fountain of judgment. There is the fountain of forgiveness.

Yes, the greatest school of pitifulness is in the presence of Christ. From Him, in Temple court and city street, on mountain brow and sea-shore,

in the wilderness and in the domestic circle of Bethany, the preacher catches that new tone which shall give his accusation commendation and power. But there is another teacher, still, who will greatly help to fix the lesson in his heart if only he be heard. That teacher is Memory. Memory is always waiting to whisper in the preacher's ear. "And such were some of you," writes St. Paul to the Corinthians, "but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God." Ah! the preacher, himself is but a sinner saved by grace. There was a time when *he*, also, was in the far country, when he, also, was a rebel against law and love, when even he was "lost already." Can he forget those days of darkness and of shame? Can he forget how the warning ambassador of his hitherto despised Redeemer came to *him?* Can he forget the mire and the clay and the horrible pit from which a strong hand brought him forth? Let him "think on these things" as he looks upon his congregation, as he rebukes their contumacy. Let him remember that he has come into the pulpit only by the steps of mercy, by the long-suffering grace of a sin-pardoning God.

Here, then, is an essential part of the preacher's training—the training of his own heart to tenderness. If he fail in giving attention to this, all other education will be worse than fruitless. The age needs the pitiful Church. The age and the Church

need the pitiful ministry. This is not to say that men look to the pulpit for nothing but softly spoken indulgences. Conscience has taught them that the message should hurt where hurt is salutary. They will not recognise as kindness the withholding, or the dilution of any truth. On the other hand they give to the motive of the preacher who does these things a less flattering name. They will say—have we not heard the criticism ?—that the preacher is afraid to be faithful, afraid to offend for reasons that are selfish and cowardly. The offence of unwelcome truth is covered when that truth is watered by a preacher's tears.

So let us preach—declaring "the *whole counsel*" concerning sin for pity's sake, preaching the whole truth concerning salvation too. Something is in our mind to ask concerning our presentation of this last-named portion of our message :—Are we always quite faithful as to what we call the conditions of salvation ? In the presentation of these conditions great skill and great care are required. It is so easy to under—or over—emphasise, so easy, out of jealousy for God, to make the way too hard or, out of a desire to win men, to make it too easy. Perhaps in the latter possibility lies, in our time, the greater danger. Do we always ask for *penitence* as unmistakably as we ought ? There should be repentance "*toward* God" as well as "faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." We may at least suggest the question :—Whether we do not sometimes call for the latter,

saying too little of the former. Again, in calling for faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, is it not easy to appear to demand a mere belief in historic facts when what is required is the trustful surrender of the soul to the Redeemer? We have seen fifty people hold up their hands, at the request of a preacher, to signify their turning to God, and we have noted that no outward sign of deep emotion accompanied the act. We have watched a multitude pass through an inquiry room where, though inquirers were many, tears were few. That "there are diversities of operations" we know. "Old times are changed, old manners gone." All this we admit, and, perhaps, we should not demand to see again such things as Time has cast behind him. But, oh! those were great days when the returning rebel smote upon his breast and would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, as with sobs and groans, he cried, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Those were glorious scenes when, in one and the same hour, he broke for ever with old habits, old companionships, old loves and, with eyes still streaming went forth exclaiming, "'Tis done, the great transaction's done!"

CHAPTER III.

The Note of Idealism.

THE Christian preacher is not only the accuser of men and the ambassador of reconciliation; he is also the Prophet of a new order. "Go, preach, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," so runs his commission. His message must convey more than the promise of a deliverance from the *consequences* of sin. It must proclaim new possibilities for the individual. It must point to higher altitudes for the race. The preacher announces a New Jerusalem descending out of heaven. His ministry is not to lead to the better only, but to the best.

For such preaching as this there is, deep down in the heart of man, a great hunger and thirst. Sordid and materialistic as is the life of the age, engrossed as the multitudes appear to be in the pursuit of mammon, of vain glory and of pleasure, there still lingers in the human breast a suspicion that men were fashioned for something higher than the things that, so often, first engross and then exhaust their powers. The millionaire is not satisfied with his

millions and, of late, has told us so. The man of pleasure is not satisfied with his pleasures, and, when he unburdens his secret mind, confesses his disappointment and disgust. Corn, wine and oil, houses, lands and station are all the objects of loathing as well as of pursuit, to those who, having won them, have found out their real quality. It is a primal instinct of the race that "the life is more than meat and the body than raiment."

To the student of our times there is nothing more pathetic than to observe the struggles of those upon whom materialism casts its spell to escape from their bondage. To aid them in this endeavour they call the painter, the sculptor, the dramatist, the man of letters, the player skilled in the language of music, and to one and all they say, "Idealise! Idealise!" Periods of realism in art never last long, though, in a sense, realism is easier to the artist than idealism. The explanation is that it is not realism that is really in demand. The artist must give us not man as he is, but as he *ought* to be; not life as we know it, but life as we *would* know it and live it, too; not the human face scarred and seamed by vices inherited from a thousand tainted years, but fresh, and sweet, and beautiful as it came from the hands of God, new washed in the dews of His infinite affection. Even nature must be idealised, and the painter struggles to produce the perfect landscape, the sculptor to represent the perfect form. The artist who mixes no imagination

with his colours never holds for long the public honour. The heart of man asks for the ideal; the actual is not enough.

And to the preacher, also, these unsatisfied spirits bring the same request. If it is not upon their lips, you may read it in the deep longing of their unquiet eyes. The age is not a happy age, and its lack of happiness does not arise, alone, from its sicknesses, its bereavements, its shattered hopes, the cruelties of "offence's gilded hand." Some one has said that men would be happy if it were not for their pleasures, and the saying contains a profound truth. In this unhappiness they turn to see if, peradventure, the preacher can show them higher and clearer heights of joy. Sometimes, thank God! the vision splendid is spread before them. It is a vision no poet or painter, save such as have been to the springs of the Eternal, can depict, and if the glory of it find its way into the seeker's soul life for him is never the same again. But sometimes, alas! he is disappointed. The voice in the pulpit is little more than a sanctimonious echo of the voices of the street. Then goes the sorrowing seeker hence, and lo, the tiny glimmer of hope with which he came has all but been put out!

For it is a criticism one all too often hears, that the modern preacher, instead of asking too much, asks too little, and that, when he *does* ask for much, his asking is more for great faith than for great living from both the individual and the age. It

has been remarked that almost the whole of the difference between the Christian preacher and the heathen moralist is expressed in the statement that the preacher adds to his teaching a flavour of Jewish history and sweetens with the promise of a future life. Otherwise the heathen moralist points as far up the mountain side as he. There is such a possibility as that of preaching along too low a level. It is an ill thing when the preacher becomes content with the straw and forgets the crown.

For the preacher like the rest of men may become enslaved to things and powers material. "Where there is no vision the people perish," and of vision, in the larger sense, the preacher may share the general poverty. After all, even he belongs to the age into which he was born, and it needs qualities that are none too common to resist the influences of the times and of environment. Beside all this, are there not personal experiences in the lives of all of us which make it hard to keep our eyes upon the stars? We think of the local preacher spending his week in the market or behind the counter, in office or mine or factory or in the field wrestling with Nature for the bread that perisheth. We think of the minister often worried, almost distracted, by "the care of the churches," by the crabbed foolishness and miserable jealousies of contentious men and women. We must remember that for many a preacher life is not a May Day festival, but a question and a struggle. Surely the wonder is *not*

that sometimes the man in the pulpit speaks in a minor key, but that, under all the conditions of his life, we hear from him so much of the higher music as we do. The memory comes to us as we write of a man who preached the Gospel for years with the cruel disease of cancer gnawing at his vitals. We can recall others who came to proclaim the golden year from domestic circles blighted by the debauchery and vice of children but too well beloved. Did these men sometimes speak falteringly, and with hesitation, the message in which they asked and promised glorious things? Did they, from the very darkness of the clouds lowering above them, see only the lower slopes of the Mountains of the Lord? Who could wonder? The preacher is but a man!

Yes, the preacher is but a man, and as a man finds out something else:—That, after all, it is not out of his experiences of life, nor from the influences of his time, nor from both together that the greatest hindrance to altitude of tone in his preaching arises. As a man *is in heart and life* so in some degree he preaches. The call of the Gospel is to perfection, and the perfect man is not yet, though many there are, even in these days, whose lives are a constant and noble struggle to reach this far-off mark. Is it strange that sometimes a preacher's own failure to gain the wished for heights should cause him to put before others possibilities, not, indeed, according to his own low level of attainment, but still far below

those he is sent to declare? Living on low levels means inevitably preaching on low levels, though, as a man's preaching is derived from higher sources than are found in his own soul, his call to others ought always to be of higher things than he has, himself, attained.

Here, then, are some of the reasons why it often happens that our preaching lacks the elevation of high idealism. This idealism is none the less needed that there are reasons for its absence. Along these lines lies one of the great struggles of the preacher's life, which is so triumphantly to resist the influences of his day and the depression of his personal experiences, so to live his own life that he shall always be able to act as a joyful guide to the Alps of God.

And what are these higher heights to which he has to point his fellows? We ask the question first as concerning the individual and then as concerning the nations. We shall surely find it easy to obtain an answer to the inquiry in both its forms.

"*Easy!*" Yes; for the heights designed for us to reach are so clearly mapped out in the teaching, and especially in the life of Him whose word the preacher comes forward to declare, and whose example it is his glorious employment to put before the world. "The prize of the mark of our high calling" is the utter conquest of sin in the heart, its eradication not only in branch but in very root. Our goal is the utterly blameless life. It is more

glorious, even, than this. It is the realisation in their perfection, not of negative virtues alone, but of virtues positive, active, aggressive. It is in brief the "perfect man in Christ Jesus."

And of what use is any lower understanding or interpretation of the purpose of Christ? Indeed, is any lower interpretation possible on the face of things? We cannot bring ourselves to believe that He would of set purpose come to secure a *partial* triumph in the subjects of His grace. We speak of the difficulties of this our doctrine, but, after all, greater difficulties would have to be overcome in consenting to any lower conception of the divine intent. Try to imagine the Master effecting the saving of a soul with the design that it shall still hold to some remains of former vices, to some of its old lusts, of its ancient enmities. Imagine Him, again, agreeing that a man shall continue to be the prey of evil tempers, of covetousness, of jealousy, of pride and falseness. Imagine Him entering into a tacit compromise with the forces of evil, that He will take *so much* and expect no more in the worship and ownership and conquest of those for whom He died. The idea is unthinkable! Jesus Christ came, suffered, bled, died, rose again, and ascended up on high that once more the eyes of God might look upon *a perfect man.*

Now, all this sounds very old-fashioned and very much like the teaching that we have heard, and perhaps in varying degrees disparaged, from

the lips of those whom we call, sometimes with a slight, but none the less real, touch of sarcasm, "holiness men." How afraid we are that any one should ask us to be too good! But the teaching of Scriptural holiness was once one of the glories of Methodism and clear in the forefront of her preaching. To-day, perhaps, we hear less concerning that gospel than once we did. Is it absolutely certain that this fact always works out to the advantage of the preacher and his people? To-day, also, we hear less concerning the joy of the Christian life than formerly; less concerning new triumphs in the conversion of sinners than in days it is glorious to remember. To-day men complain, as we have already heard, that the preachers ask too little and do not bid them look so high as something in their bosoms tells them they ought to look. The preaching of Scriptural holiness has been discredited, it must be confessed, by the language into which it has often been thrown; by a disposition to censoriousness in those who have given it a large place in their ministry; by a disposition, too, on the part of its preachers to label as sins many things which were capable of innocent use and enjoyment, to cut out of life more than they sought to put in, dealing rather in prohibitions than in inspirations. This doctrine has suffered, again, more than most, from the inconsistencies of its apostles, as was indeed inevitable and should have been expected, for the higher a man's preaching the

more clearly his personal imperfections are brought out by force of contrast, which may be rather to the glory of the preaching than to its discredit. Say, however, all that can be said in this direction concerning the doctrine of Christian Perfection; the ideals of the Gospel for human living are no lower than the highest word the Perfectionist has ever uttered. These ideals, as put before us and required of us, are part of the message of the Cross, and the preaching which does not include and enforce them is incomplete and cannot become, in the highest sense, effective in the accomplishment of its divine purpose. When a man's preaching presents ideals higher than those of the Sermon on the Mount; when he asks for a whiter purity, a more embracing charity, a nobler style of living than are required by Jesus Christ, *then* will have come the time to call a halt. Up to this point he has behind him not only divine permission but divine command. By his ears, if he but listen, may be heard, also, the voices of men who are weary of the valleys and the swamps, and who long to climb the heights and pierce the clouds that hold their vision from the skies. We need a new Puritanism, and it must not be a Puritanism principally of prohibitions, as was the old. It must be a Puritanism in which all the glories possible to heart and mind and soul are set forth in charm and beauty.

But the preacher has a message for society, as well as for the individual, and it is essential to the

highest uses of that message that sublimer notes should be struck than are commonly heard. Jesus Christ showed an interest in trade, and the sellers of doves and changers of money heard from Him, one day, words of such a sort as made their ears to tingle. The preacher must not be afraid to insist on perfect integrity, perfect honesty, and even perfect brotherhood in commerce. We have heard somewhere the story of a business man in Brighton to whom, one day, a customer chanced to speak concerning F. W. Robertson—perhaps, taking one thing with another the most influential preacher of the Victorian era. Leading his client into a little room behind the shop he pointed, with these words, to a portrait upon the wall: "That is F. W. Robertson, and when, standing behind the counter, I feel a temptation to do a dishonest thing in trade, I come in here and look up at that face." What a tribute this to a great ministry which had its message for the office and the shop and turned commerce and handicraft into great religious acts.

To the world of industry the messenger of Christ must also bring the new ideals he has learned. Why should the relationships of master and servant, of capital and labour, be poisoned by suspicion and marred by covetousness, oppression, evasion of mutual obligations? The problem to be solved in this twentieth century is probably this of the relations between the man with money to spend and the man with work to sell. Ah, if only Jesus Christ

were President of the Board of Trade! Paul was not afraid to lift up his voice on these extremely practical subjects, and even now, the sixth chapter of Ephesians is far from out of date: "Servants," he says, turning to the one class, "be obedient to them that are your masters . . . . not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." To the masters also, he has something to say: "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him." St. James, that great practical homilist, could not be silent here. Of all who ever addressed the capitalist upon his responsibilities surely never one spoke more strongly than did he. "Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. . . . . Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." Here is denunciation hot and stirring, and the preacher may at times have to denounce, and when the time comes, must face that duty manfully for the sake of God and men. On this page, however, we plead not for denunciation but for idealism,—idealism supported by the truths of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, and enforced by all the tender meanings of the Cross.

For the world of statesmanship, again, the preacher has a teaching of idealism, which is a very different thing from the preaching of party politics, which has done more harm a thousand times than any good it has ever effected. In the nation as Christ would have it there should be no jealousy between class and class; no oppression of the poor by the rich; no reproach for either honest poverty or honest wealth. In such a state there would be a chance for every man. Government would not mean tyranny; liberty would not mean licence. There would be purity of administration. There would be consecration of national resources to the good of all. War, by such a state, would be as impossible as it is now imminent. In such a state, again, sermons on the text, "Our country right or wrong," would neither find preachers to deliver them nor audiences to listen to them. When the New Jerusalem is built in England, the slum, the gin palace, the workhouse, and the gaol will be things of the past. "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts; there shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." Oh, the dream is overpowering in its glory; and it is not a dream, but a prophecy from Calvary to the sorrowing nations of a sinful world!

So the errand of the preacher is to declare the Golden Age for which men have longed with, oh,

such longing! amid the sins, and crimes, and miseries which have made up so much of human history. Of this so greatly desired time have they dreamed. To bring it in they have schemed and laboured, bled and died. They have thought to hasten its dawn by the founding of "Utopias," of "Merrie Englands," by many a promising, but disappointing device. There is but one man who can tell them how it must come—how indeed it will come—and he is the man who has sat at the feet of Jesus Christ; who has seen His arms extended wide upon the Cross and learned those politics in which eternity is set. The Golden Age will come when the world shall listen to him, and give itself to the practice of that old doctrine which is to be the creation not only of a new Heaven, but, also, of a new Earth.

But the preacher must do more than formulate the divine command; more than paint glowing pictures of glorious possibilities. It is required that his idealism shall be shown to be practicable. It is of no use to tell a drunkard that Christ wants sobriety, or a liar that the Lord wants truth in the inward parts; it is of no use preaching about the conquest of temper and of passion; about the crucifixion of covetousness and envy and jealousy; about patience, gentleness, kindness, love, unless, along with the demands of this new scheme of living, the great evangelical watchwords and promises ring strong and true. The glory of the preacher is that he, alone of those who bring forth programmes for

the lives of men, can tell us how his programme may be carried out. He has a wonderful authority given unto him in his dealings with the weak and erring. He can make to every man who gives himself to Christ, and to the living of the life He asks, the promise that Christ will give to him nothing less than His own very self. To any man who tremblingly, tearfully "makes up his mind to try," the preacher may pledge his Lord in guarantees which will be honoured to the very uttermost. *Power!* There is God's for his promising. *Grace!* There is Christ's for his disposal. He is the almoner of an infinite bounty. Then to the preacher there comes from his own vision a courage which he can communicate to others. No other man sees such possibilities in human nature as he, for he looks on man in Jesus Christ, and discerns better things in him than man had hoped for in himself. He beholds, also, the Spirit of God at work in the world; hears His footsteps as He goes to and fro in the land. Hence he can cry to the nations to lift up their head, knowing that "the Lord Omnipotent reigneth." He is the idealist whose ideals—more "impossible" than all the dreams of moralists and poets—are the true practical politics of individual and national life. The time is ripe for a new preaching of the possibilities of humanity, for a new setting forth of what life and character, personal and national, may be, and *must* be, to please Him and realise the blessing the Creator had it in His heart to give to

man when first He sent him forth in the glory of His image. For such preaching, we have already said, men are waiting, listening, longing. They wait, too, for a new declaration of the high provisions of help available for human endeavour. Men instinctively anticipate that the ideals of God concerning them will be high, but they anticipate, also instinctively, that the provision for the realisation of these ideals will be sufficient. They do not ask that, for the sake of human weakness, God shall make honesty less than honest; truth less than true; purity less than pure, but they do ask that for all these things He shall give grace and guidance. Does our preaching answer these instinctive expectations, these deep longings, these inborn hopes in those to whom we are sent? Do we truly put before them that high life their spirits yearn to live? Do we show them the path "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent," to the heights that kiss the stars?

If we do, well; but if not:—Then, perhaps, we should not wonder, nor be astonished, if pews are empty, if church membership declines, if men say that there is little profit in coming to hear thoughts no higher than their own. They look for the preacher to ask for better, higher, harder things than all their other leaders. If he fail in this his church has but little to draw them within its doors. Practical idealism is essential to effective and successful preaching.

CHAPTER IV.

The Note of Edification.

THE preacher is appointed for the upbuilding of the Church and of the individual believer upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone." Upon this foundation, with almost infinite care, with untiring labour and solicitude and prayerfulness, has he to rear "a temple fitly framed together" of "gold, silver and precious stones;" upon this foundation he has to build the fabric of saintly character in men. Only that preacher is truly successful who, in the end, is able humbly to claim to have been in this sense a "wise master-builder;" who can point to the results of his labours in the beauty and strength of the churches in which he has toiled, in the saintliness of the men and women to whom he has spoken the re-creating, re-edifying word.

Now, in our day, it is, perhaps, specially needful that this part of the preacher's duty should be particularly emphasised. Of the Church it has to be said that she has fallen on somewhat evil times,

for there is evidence of the growth of a tendency toward a Churchless Christianity. Many there are who take the view that union with the Church is of small importance to the development of Christian faith and character. There are more who regard such union as something which, while it may have certain advantages, is nevertheless entirely optional with the Christian believer. Again and again have we been told that Christianity consists of belief in Jesus Christ resulting in an attempt to imitate Him, and that, as this belief and this attempt can be achieved outside of any organised religious community, a man may be essentially a Christian without being a member of the Church. The reasons for this attitude are not far to seek. Among them are a selfishness which fears the sacrifice that membership of the Church might involve; a slothfulness anticipating with apprehension the possible demands for Christian service which the Fellowship might make, and a lack of real intensity and enthusiasm in conviction, which hesitates to make an out-and-out stand for Christ and truth.

From the same causes, in all ages, men have kept outside the organised flock of God and, therefore, such reasons as these need not greatly alarm us. But there is another objection to joining the Church which, alas! is often heard, which peculiarly concerns the preacher and ought to lead him to much careful inquiry. It is that objection which quotes

against the Church her own condition. It is alleged that, nowadays, the faith of the Church is in a state of flux; that her enthusiasm has cooled to the point of chill; that her members are in such small degree better than the men and women outside their society that their company does not promise any moral and spiritual help to a man in search of saving and ennobling companionships. It is said, moreover, that the Church is so divided, sub-divided and sub-*sub*-divided that it is impossible to be sure as to where the true Church may be found. Finally, we are told that in all probability if Jesus Christ came to earth in the flesh, He would in these times be found outside the sanctuaries in which His name is supposed to be honoured.

Now, many of these assertions may surely be shown to be the result of misunderstanding, of delusion, even of prejudice, and so should not be taken too much to heart. They may serve, however, to remind us of two truths which ought to be often in mind. The first is that Christianity needs the Church; the second, that the Church needs Christianity. As to the former proposition:—The Church is the Christian organism. It is principally through her agencies and activities that the purposes of Christianity are to be realised. This is true not only of those universal purposes which include the ideals of world-wide sovereignty, but, let men say what they will, it is true of those which relate to the realisation of Christ's will in

the individual soul. It is *not* the fact that men find it as easy to live the Christian life outside the Church as within. This is sufficiently demonstrated by experience. Personal religion grows in the fellowship and the sacrifice, in the labours, the strength and inspiration consequent upon membership in a great and imperial family.

But the Church needs Christianity, and this, too, the preacher, for her sake, must deeply and constantly realise. The best antidote to the tendency toward a Churchless Christianity will be found, not in argument or command; certainly not in denunciations addressed to those who are outside the fold, but in the realisation by the Church herself of her glorious possibilities both as to character, labour and conquest. What is needed to save the Church from the opposing influences of our times is simply more of what she *may* have *if she will*. She needs a definite and not a nebulous belief. She needs a living and burning enthusiasm; a joy that will not be silent, and a hope that will not cower before the pessimism of the age. She needs such a piety as shall furnish a splendid contrast to the lives of all around her. In short, she must realise the ideals of her Founder, and every glorious prophecy shall be fulfilled. All the nations of the world shall flow into her. Kings shall come to the brightness of her rising. Men shall flock to her courts as doves to glowing windows from the cold and darkness of the wintry night.

So, for the sake of the world which cannot spare the Church, and for the sake of the Church which cannot dispense with what the preacher has to give, it is required that this duty of the Christian ministry be emphasised. Another reason must be stated that it may be underlined:—Faith, piety and enthusiasm, labour, sacrifice and victory are vital to the inner health and joy of the Church herself. *This*, too, the preacher must remember. Solemn, indeed, is the obligation resting upon him, and solemnly have the great preachers of all ages taken this responsibility to heart. "The care of the churches!"—how heavily it lay upon the shoulders of those early ambassadors whose confessions of fear concerning failure are written in the epistles. How it has driven to the Mercy Seat for help and guidance those whose work it has been, in troublous times, to keep the flock of God committed to their custody! The feeding of the sheep in the wilderness, the care of the lambs, the strengthening of the weak, the endless, patient, prayerful striving needed in the pursuit of erring, foolish, falling ones, that all may be presented perfect in Christ Jesus—what demands do these make upon the preacher's noblest powers! In the dressing and polishing, to change the figure, of each quarried stone that the result may be seen in a building after the similitude of a palace, flashing in the light of God—here has lain the task in which many a glorious life has been gloriously spent;

for even Jesus could not entrust to a man a grander or more onerous task than this!

And what manner of preaching is needed for the service of this saving and edifying end? It must surely be a preaching *of* the Church *to* the Church. It is to be questioned whether we have not largely failed to place before our people the New Testament doctrine of the Church. With such a failure may be associated another:—To emphasise duly the importance of those sacraments which are the inheritance of the Church from age to age. Can we deny that there is among our members a tendency to view very lightly the privileges and obligations of their membership in what we call—we have sometimes thought unhappily and with unfortunate effect—our societies? Again, can it be denied that amongst us as a people the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is undervalued? Faithfulness to the Church and to her sacraments run together. How many are there who have but the dimmest possible conception of what the Church is and of what membership in the Church really signifies and involves? There is much work to be done here—spade work we might almost call it—for the ground has hardly yet been broken amongst us. May we venture a suggestion that, among things inherited from an earlier day, the word "societies" as signifying churches should be dropped in favour of the nobler word, and that the preacher, in particular, should cease to use it in this relationship? Unless

we are wrong in our reading of history this use of the term grew out of the view, long held by the founder of Methodism, that while the Anglican community was the *Church*, the assemblies collected by himself were merely groups of people meeting for mutual help in spiritual things. The time came, no doubt, when he would have been willing to allow to these assemblies, as to the great community of which they were the individual congregations, the title for which we plead; though he himself it must be remembered, remained a member of the Church of England until his death. Let the preacher take very high ground on this matter. This little band of lowly men and women meeting in their humble sanctuary by the wayside for intercourse on spiritual things, for the hearing of the word of life, for mutual encouragement in the celestial pilgrimage, for praise and prayer and breaking of bread; this little company "gathered together in My name," Jesus being "in the midst;" this little circle upon which is shed abroad the Holy Ghost for the teaching, comforting, sanctifying and anointing of the heavenly Bride—this little company, we say, is more than a "society." Its members form a *church*, and theirs are the glory, the privileges, the obligations of that "upper room" of eternal memory. Let them be told this—kept in remembrance of it—led to delight in it—encouraged to glory concerning it. Let it be laid down that it is not for this village fellowship to

thank any man or woman, however exalted his or her social station, for condescending to membership therein, but that the honour of the association lies in being permitted an entrance into the fold, small as is the number of the flock and lowly as its members may be. We are confident that the scattered churches of our name need lifting into a realisation of their high dignity in Christ Jesus. Of all the subjects waiting for earnest study, and to which we as preachers, both ministers and laymen, need for the sake of present day necessities to turn our minds, none is more important than this. The Church can only retain, or rather, perhaps, we ought to have said—can only enter into her power through self-realisation. *Here* is need for a systematic educational work, and, should it be left undone, we must not be astonished if our members wear the bonds of their union lightly, and easily find ways out of a fellowship whose true significance they have never understood. Another eventuality, too, must not astonish us:—The Church of England *does* hold and preach a doctrine of the Church, preaches it diligently; preaches it, sometimes, with such limitations of application as we may well resent. The Roman Catholics do the same, and with limitations that are still more uncompromising. We of the Free Churches must not be astonished if, as a result of definite and positive teaching within other walls and a lack of such teaching within our own, the people drift away from us.

To build up the Church we must preach the Church. She needs the sense of herself.

Important, however, as is the enunciation of the doctrine of the Church, the work of her edification will demand that the preacher have many other things to say. We have already referred to the presentation of a high idealism as essential to the completeness of the Christian message. It is indispensable to the adequate accomplishment of this duty that the preacher give himself to a systematic exposition of the Scriptures. May we even dare to say that it will be necessary for him to devote much of his strength to what has been termed doctrinal preaching? That these words will have a terrible sound in many ears we are aware. It is very unpopular, nowadays, to lay emphasis on the necessity for creed as well as for conduct—for creed, indeed, for the sake of conduct. We will, nevertheless, make bold to remark that one of the great desiderata of the day is a revival of expository preaching, while another, equally great, is a renaissance of doctrinal preaching. There is not too much theology taught in the churches, but too little. We are told that the preacher's first business is to treat of what are called "living issues"; that he should, above all, exalt conduct and charity as the great concerns of the soul. It is contended that men need guidance on public questions and that the preacher, as the representative of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Church, should

endeavour to meet that need. Of course there is truth in it all, but it is also true that men need, most of all, the knowledge of God, and that, whatever bewilderment may exist in relation to public questions and moral issues, there is bewilderment, even greater, as to "the faith once delivered to the saints." There is no truly edifying preaching that is without theology. By such knowledge is the Church built up, and the preacher will teach it to his people in the form in which it can be assimilated. One thing he will surely not forget:—That upon him rests a great responsibility, not only in regard to the Church of to-day, but also concerning the Church of to-morrow, as now gathered before him in the persons of the young people preparing for life and service. He ought, certainly, to provide strengthening food for them in view of responsibilities to come. It is a great charge, this of building up the body of Christ, and it is upon us all to ask ourselves to what extent we have endeavoured to discharge this obligation. We admit that the temptations to evade it are many. Doctrinal and expository preaching require so much thought, such careful preparation, such scrupulous exactness in expression. It is little wonder that, wearied by other activities, the preacher sometimes seeks for subjects which can be treated with greater ease and less expenditure of intellectual effort than those we have indicated.

And such wonder as we may have is further

diminished when we recollect that the idea is very commonly held that the people do not want preaching of this type; that, even within the churches indeed, they prefer being *pleased* to being taught. Possibly this is not so true as has been assumed. Perhaps again, in that degree in which it *is* true, the lesson to be learned from the fact is not that such preaching should be withheld, but rather that an effort should be made to invest it with elements of interest and attractiveness which have possibly too often been lacking. On this point we will have something to say later on. Meanwhile we are open to maintain that people do not dislike exposition and theology *as such*. The late Doctor McLaren was an expository preacher, and his sermons were as charming as fairy tales, multitudes flocking, through a long course of years, to hear them. C. H. Spurgeon was a doctrinal preacher, and untold thousands hung entranced upon his lips. Each man built up a great congregation, in which the fruits of the spirit flourished in a perpetual harvest of virtues, works and sacrifice. To-day the greatest churches in London are, almost without exception, those whose members sit at the feet of great preachers who are also, according to their separate schools, great theologians and masters in the art of interpreting the Scriptures. We remember as we write a cold and depressing Sabbath evening last autumn when we turned into Westminster Chapel. Only a few years ago this

great sanctuary was a wilderness in which might be realised the tragedy that is contained in the phrase "a down-town church." At this moment it is the home of a mighty spiritual fellowship. On the night of our visit the immense temple was crowded from floor to ceiling. The congregation had obviously been drawn from all ranks and conditions of society. Professional men sat side by side with horny-handed sons of toil, fine ladies with servant girls, the old with the young. What new device of sensationalism had brought them together? What startling announcement had been flung out over the city to attract this mighty concourse? Absolutely none! The sermon was a closely reasoned doctrinal address, full of quotations from the Scriptures and of comparison of passage with passage. It was a sermon to *tax* attention. We mention this experience to show that doctrinal preaching need not mean empty sanctuaries, as is often asserted. Here was a great congregation and, better still, here was a living Church.

A further duty of the preacher, that the message may become approved in the building up of the Church, is that of impressing the demands of Jesus Christ upon those who bear His name. Preaching needs to be more exacting than it is. There are vast multitudes in the Church whose religious life—if indeed they have such a life—is absolutely parasitical. They render no service; they offer no sacrifice; their only confession of faith

is a more or less intermittent attendance at the public sessions of worship. By such people, one has humourously said, the Church seems to be regarded as a Pullman car bound for glory. Their chief desires are that the train may run so slowly as to enable them to enjoy the scenery by the way; that the time-bill shall allow of frequent and lengthy stoppages on the journey, and *especially* that the conclusion of the trip shall be postponed to as late an hour as possible, as they labour under no extravagant anxiety to come to its end. Are we uncharitable in suspecting that the chief reason many of these people have for making some degree of preparation for Paradise is that they cannot remain on earth and that Heaven is, on the whole, to be preferred to the only other country available? Ah! the preacher has much of this kind of material on his hands and, notwithstanding its quality, the commission to build it up into strength and beauty still applies.

Clearly, in such cases, the duty of the edifying preacher is not to hide, but *to emphasise* the demands of Jesus Christ for active participation in some form of Christian service. "The harvest truly is plenteous but the labourers are few," and altogether apart from the advantages to be gained by the Church from the bringing in of the sheaves, there is a benefit to be won by the reaper as he garners the grain, which is entirely beyond calculation. Our fathers made it their business in the case of

every new convert to find him "something to do." Sometimes the results were unfortunate, in that men were put to work they were not qualified to attempt; but the new employment kept many a man from falling, and often helped to make useful and polished instruments out of very unpromising material. Nearly a thousand years ago Peter the Hermit passed like a flame of fire across the provinces of Europe calling upon men to wrest the Holy places from the hands of the Saracen. In countless thousands they responded to his call, even little children arising and pressing eastward on the great emprise. Surely there is need enough for crusading to-day. Surely, too, there are multitudes who, for their own souls' sake, and for the sake of the Church, would be all the better for the health and vigour which a little crusading would bring. Upon us rests the obligation in Christ's name to call these hitherto unemployed and ineffective ones to the standard of the Cross.

And to this demand for service it is the preacher's duty to add, in view of the advantages to follow in the life and character, the faith and influence of the Church, an equally strong demand for sacrifice. It is no kindness of the pulpit to cut down the requirements of the Lord upon the time, the strength, the comfort and the substance of those who profess themselves His followers. He that would have life eternal "let him go and sell all that he hath and give to the poor." "He that will be My

disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." "He that would save his life the same shall lose it." In these figurative words lies one secret of spiritual growth and health.

So then it comes to this :—That the edification of the Church and of the individual believer, so far as it forms part of the task of this, our messenger, is to be accomplished by the faithful preaching of such things as the Master has left on record for the learning of His followers, and by calling them to make proof of truth in the exercise of Christian activity, self-denial, sacrifice and self-culture. We believe, notwithstanding all that may be said to the contrary, that the Church and her children long to hear this message and that they will respond to it. Once more we admit that to the preacher, it may not be the easiest kind of preaching to attempt, for here he will soon be among the deep things of God, and he will have to ask for great endeavours and great surrenders. But the divine commission is in his hands, and has he not undertaken to speak what God shall teach him

> "Till we have built Jerusalem
> In England's green and pleasant land"?

CHAPTER V.

The Note of Cheer.

THE chapter now to be added is written under the influence of a Sabbath afternoon service in which, a few hours ago, we occupied a pew. The scene was a village chapel among the mountains of the North of England. The preacher was a layman well advanced in age, who told us that, for five-and-forty years, he had been coming from the head of the circuit to take appointments in the village. The sermon was not eloquent. It was neither learned nor profound. It gave no evidence of any great acquaintance with modern thought. There was absolutely no attempt at exegesis. Indeed, the discourse would have failed to satisfy most of those elementary canons upon which the homiletical professors lay such stress. Yet, one great excellence it had, which, to its simple-minded auditors, more than atoned for all its many imperfections:—It was effective; it was successful. We came away thanking God for the testimony we had heard.

And herein lay the success of this local brother's unpretentious discourse:—It *cheered us*, one and all.

Faces brightened and drooping heads were lifted up as the old man pursued his way. The last hymn was the heartiest of all, not because, as is sometimes the case, the people were encouraged by the thought of approaching liberation, but because of the spiritual "uplift" they had realised. We heard a happy buzz of pleasant talk from young and old as they poured through the door to assemble in friendly groups for mutual "good-days" on the pavement in front of the little temple. With most of them we were well acquainted. Some were aged and infirm. Others found the struggle of life a hard one. One pew was filled with mourners who, during the latest week, had stood around an open grave. There were Christian workers to whom recent days had brought disappointments and weariness—labourers in the vineyard who had much to try their faith, for religious work in the villages has many difficulties in these days when the great towns attract so many of our most hopeful young people from the lanes to the streets. The widow was there, the orphan, the poor, the man who had failed in life. Ah! those people had come together bringing with them to the sanctuary much doubt and care and perplexity and fear. It was good to watch them as the preacher went on; good to feel that these hearts were losing their loads, these minds their anxieties. "Not a great discourse," the critic would have said. Perhaps not—from some standpoints. Having reached the end of fifty years of preaching, this

white-haired patriarch had long given up the idea of great discourses. To him the Master had said, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people," and he had walked long, long miles up the mountain side to do it. *Pace* the critic! This preaching was *the very thing* for those needy folk this wintry afternoon.

And now, in recollection of that blessed sermon, and under its gracious influence, we are strengthened to assert that it is an essential of the message that it contain good cheer for those who need it. The preacher is more than the accuser of men in Christ's stead; more, even, than the mouthpiece of a divine invitation. His task is not completed in the edifying of churches, in the building up of individual souls in faith and doctrine and righteousness. Jesus saw the sorrow of the world, anticipated the afflictions through which men would have to pass and the burdens they would have to bear. "He was touched with the feeling of our infirmities," He drank of our bitter cup. Our griefs were in His mind when He sent His preachers forth. To be the agents of a great purpose of consolation, ministers of cheer and encouragement to hard-pressed and burdened men and women to the end of time were they sent!

And for this work of consolation He not only gave a commission but He furnished, as well, an example to all who should ever preach His word. Surely one great secret of the wondrous effectiveness of that brief ministry lay in the fact that while, as we have seen, it spoke to the consciences of men,

bringing home the truths of righteousness and judgment; while it set before them the way of spiritual salvation and formulated the demands and conditions thereof, indicating the higher path, the strait gate and the narrow way, it was also directed to the bruised hearts and broken spirits of those who attended His steps. We are told, after all, but very little of the words and deeds of Jesus during those eventful years in which He trod the highways and byeways of the land breaking the bread of life from city to city. Of the period passed in Nazareth in preparation for the strenuous days to come we are told nothing at all. The world, it is said, would hardly contain the books if all had been written down. But enough is told to give us visions of those unrecorded days, and to show that He was a cheering Christ, a messenger of comfort—this Saviour of ours. Healing was in His words. "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" said, one to another, those two disciples who, with saddened countenances, had set out together to Emmaus on that troubled day. Watch Him yonder in the house at Bethany, what time bereavement casts its shadow upon the dwelling. "And He took little children in His arms and blessed them." Here, again, is a whole history of tenderness. From this one act a flood of light streams backward and forward upon His whole earthly life, and we can see the kindly glance that brought the

little ones around Him. We can hear the gentle voice that dispelled their shyness and gave confidence to their hearts. Even in that old time, and in the quiet and dreamy East, life had many cares. There were push and drive and hard and grinding rivalry even then. Those days had their economic questions as well as ours. It was only by hardest struggle that many a cupboard was furnished and many a table spread; for poverty is no new thing, and sorrow, affliction, oppression, dread and death are as old as the hills. We read of the beggar by the wayside, of Lazarus writhing in hunger and smitten with sores on the threshold of Dives, who wore purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. The widow's house was robbed; the orphan was cheated of his small inheritance; life, even for the fortunate, went much as it does now—the music of gladness to-day, the solemn tones of the dirge to-morrow. How gracious to many a hearer would be that Sermon on the Mount with its passages for the special blessing of perplexed and worried souls, spoken, also, for the teaching of all who may be called to stand before the children of grief and want. "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" . . . . "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." . . . . "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." . . . . "And why take ye

thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" . . . . "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? And not one of them is forgotten before God: But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." . . . . "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?" Think of it all! Imagine that great multitude gathered out of the cities and villages round about. It was a hard world from which they had come to hear this man of Nazareth, and, even as they came, care had tugged at their skirts; fear had rattled upon the doors of their hearts. Think what music would be in that sweet new Gospel of divine providence and affection, spoken in that calm and gentle voice whose every tone was vibrant with understanding, sympathy and love! Can we not see the people as darkness throws its veil across the blue Syrian sky turning once more to their distant homes, new hope and courage enthroned upon the forehead so recently seamed by care? Can we not follow them to the dawning of another day, and

behold their going forth, once again, to the tasks of life brightly, bravely, cheerily? To them, indeed, had come glad tidings of great joy!

And if the Master so gave Himself to this ministry of brightening the lives of men, His first preachers caught the lesson and went forth, the same good purpose lively in their hearts. To "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;" to heal "that which was lame," that "it be not turned out of the way;" "to visit the widow and the fatherless;" to "speak peace" to the people—in these happy duties lay a large part of their work. Dark, indeed, were those early days for the infant Church; heavy the clouds above her; terrible the storms of hate and persecution which spent their fury upon her and scattered abroad her fellowship, but amidst it all more songs were heard than sighs, more triumphs than complaints. In the midnight hour a strange new music ran through the prison, for Paul and Silas "prayed and sang praises and the prisoners heard them," and so, to crushed and bleeding souls, even there, a breath of heavenly comfort came. We have sometimes heard people talk of St. Paul in such a way as to picture one who was above the tenderness wherefrom sad hearts are blessed—the great theologian, the mighty logician, the lone, strong, sublime man whose self-mastery lifted him above sympathy with common men. Great he was, but great in compassion as well as in mind. Among the watchwords of encouragement you will

find none more inspiring than those written by his fettered hand. Was it not he who wrote that assurance which has so often come between us and despair:—"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God"? From him, also, came that glowing word which has shed radiance upon many a couch of pain: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." There is a more noble picture of the great Apostle to the Gentiles than that above referred to. The ship is "driven up and down in Adria." Euroclydon roars through the rigging. Mighty billows come crashing over the bulwarks. "Neither sun, nor moon nor stars" have "for many days appeared." Nearer and nearer the helpless craft is being swept to the cruel rocks of yonder savage coast. The ship's company is in an agony of dismay. Suddenly from the cabin comes he of Tarsus. "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer," he cries, above the blast, "for I believe God." Thus does he summarise in one great assuring word the message learned at the foot of the cross. Behind it is all the authority of God's revelation to his soul upon the Damascus road!

So ministered the Master, and so, His first preachers, and hence it came to pass that the early disciples of the infant faith were known for their calmness, their courage and their joy. Men "took knowledge of them that they had been

with Jesus." This was the very age of which the poet has told us :—

> On that hard Pagan World disgust
> And secret loathing fell ;
> Deep weariness and sated lust
> Made human life a hell.

But the servants of the Galilean, more persecuted than any other men, walked abroad with a gladness which was at once the perplexity and the condemnation of the time. "Rejoice evermore" was a sacred command and a glorious possibility of the new religion, for they were taught to believe that "All things are yours and ye are Christ's and Christ is God's" ; they were assured that "Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" !

That was the *first* century, and with us now is the twentieth ; and it is said that the burdens of men become more numerous and more heavy as the years pass on. Older grows the world, but there is no lessening of its care, no relief from its perplexity, its pain, its sorrow. As civilisation becomes more complex the "drive" of life waxes ever more and more fierce. Along with this complaint, it is said by some, that in the Church there is less joy than in those old days—less, indeed, than in times within the memory of the grey-haired among us. We who are Methodists are often reminded of a former Methodism which was vocal with praises

and electric with joy. They whisper that it is different with us now; that even the pulpit has lost its note of gladness. Care sits upon the preacher's brow. The songs of Zion are timed to the throb of hearts that lag for very weariness. "Some are sick and some are sad." "Cares of to-day and burdens of to-morrow" haunt us in the very means of grace, and little is said to make us forget. "Fightings without and fears within," from these we seek deliverance in vain. The prophet has forgotten how to comfort or, if he have not forgotten, he thinks the task unworthy of hours which might be more learnedly and impressively employed.

If we admit, as perhaps we may, the existence of a measure of truth in this complaint, it will only be to claim that there is some excuse for those whom it asperses. The intellectual problems bred of a materialistic age have so compelled the preacher to the defence of the walls of Zion that it may well have come to pass that the inhabitants of the city —the men and women down in the streets and dwellings, for the security of whom he has been contending—may have had to go short of many things; a time of siege is a time of deprivations and hardships for citizens as well as soldiers. The great social questions of the present day have also claimed much of his thought and effort. He has felt, and justly, that these questions ought to receive more pulpit recognition. It is possible, and should not be thought surprising, that in the ardour

of the social crusade the preacher may have sometimes given to these things time and strength which might have been better spent in ministering to the personal griefs and perplexities of such as sat before him for their need's sake. It may be well for us each to make inquiry concerning ourselves in these matters. As a result we will realise again, no doubt, how numerous and insistent are the demands made upon us to turn aside in our ministry to treat of a hundred things which once upon a time we did not think of as pulpit questions. Be this as it may, here lies work for the preacher which he must not neglect. It is as certainly his duty to cheer and encourage the heart of the individual as to indicate the path to better conditions of life for the multitude.

And this he can only effectively do as he perfects himself in his understanding of their needs. Of this understanding, and of the ways in which it must be sought, we have already written and will say no more, except to point out how every new discovery concerning the preacher's duties furnishes additional illustration of the absolute necessity that he study not books only, but also men and the conditions of their lives. It is of little use knowing the contents of well-filled shelves if we have never read the living volumes before us in the pews. Again we say, "if we only knew."

Still knowledge is not the whole of the preacher's need in order that his message may contain this

cheering quality. It is even more needful that he shall, himself, be one of those who abide in the comfort of God. He must have learned the efficacy of the great consoling and gladdening verities by experience of their application to his own soul. He only can surely cheer others who himself is cheerful, and no man who has ever felt the pressure and care of life *can* be cheerful excepting in so far as these great guarantees have become real to his own spirit. Only with "the comfort wherewith he is comforted of God" will he comfort others!

And what are the verities whose application he must have experienced? There is not one of all the glorious circle of revealed truths that is not of use for the strengthening and encouraging of men; but there are some of these truths which might almost have been designed for this special use. Do we receive—do we preach them as we ought?

There is the doctrine of Divine Providence. Surely this truth should be preached more frequently than it is. Surely, too, it should be preached in such a way as to link its meanings to the common hours, the common needs and anxieties of life. For the vast majority of men life is actually a struggle for bread for themselves and their dependants. We had almost said that it is a constant escape from ever threatening evils. The question of food and raiment is full for them of the direst probabilities. Many a man listens to the preacher whose life is, indeed, from hand to mouth. Fierce competition

seeks at every turn to rob him of his little opportunity of bread winning. Such a man had rather be told of a *providing* God than of the newest discoveries in Biblical criticism. If we forget his need and suffer him to go from the Sanctuary no more hopeful and brave than when he came—then, so far as he is concerned, we have surely failed.

There is again the doctrine of the Divine Presence. "I will be with thee in the six troubles, and in the seventh I will not leave thee." The wonderful truth of Jesus Christ in living, constant, saving nearness to every man, ready to help, to deliver and guide—here is a doctrine, mighty to comfort all the world. Before us are men who, morning by morning, go forth with trembling to spend the day in associations full of such temptations and dangers as are undreamed of by us. Here are men and women haunted by bitter memories, whose midnight solitude is disturbed by the ghosts of buried years. There are many lonely people in the world, many from whom lover and friend have been put far away. For such is this treasure of promise committed unto us. Send yonder man back to his conflict; yonder stranger to his loneliness; yonder memoried soul to his solitude to face again the spirits of his bygone days, with this thought: that every step of the way—whether in the city or in the desert—Jesus Christ will be by his side. Such a preaching will be sweeter to him a thousand times than perplexing metaphysical discussions.

Then let us not forget to apply the *promises* by which the Master has strengthened the exhortations given to His servants in all times to labour in the fields of Christian service. Of such promises there is surely a varied and glorious store, and for all of them there is need enough. Never do we preach but before us is some toiler almost ready to give up because of long delay in the appearance of the first signs of harvest. *Encourage him!* Tell him that the God of the sowing is also the God of the reaping. Tell him not to be "weary in well doing, for in due season" he "shall reap if" he "faint not." Tell him that "he that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Tell him *this*. He has heard it all before, of course, or else he had not so long struggled on in the work. Tell it him again and again, for again and again the need to hear it all will come. Tell it him gloriously, confidently. He will go back to his Sunday School class, back to his labour among the poor, out to his next appointment on the plan, with a new hope which will be also a new power!

And let us remember that there has been given unto us for the comforting of His people the revelation of the glory laid up for them that fear Him. To the writer a little while ago an able and spiritually minded Unitarian minister made this statement:— "In every service I conduct I announce, at least, one hymn on immortality. The people need to

hear of it." There is food for thought in such a confession from such a source. Once upon a time it was common in Methodism to hear sermons on Heaven. To-day how infrequent such sermons are! Yet surely the King has not withdrawn this portion of the message from our hands. And surely there is occasion for such reminders to be given. How many there are to whom "Earth's but a sorry tent;" how many, again, who go in bondage to the fear of death all their days; how many more who look mournfully after departed dear ones and wonder how it goes with them across the stream. To all such people is the preacher commissioned, and they look wistfully toward him for the word that may let the glory in!

And that word we do not speak nowadays as often as we might, perhaps not as often as we ought. Here, again, is something to be recovered by the present-day preacher. Possibly when he comes to talk of the glories "laid up," this same preacher may find need for some new forms of expression. Perhaps he will not find it possible to speak with the old literalism of his predecessors. But the living core of the message is still his as it was theirs. The divine example, too, is before him every time he harks back to his Master's presence. In that great day of sorrow when He spake to the disciples of His early departure, He, seeing their grief, said, "In My Father's house are many mansions . . . . I go to prepare a place for you." *Preach Heaven!*

This very day there are hearts breaking for the story!

To cheer the souls of men by the use of this, or any other material, and in any legitimate way we can—to this must our preaching be absolutely and resolutely bent. To make brighter the lives of men; to take out of the future its dark dreads and fears and to fill it with beckoning blessings; to make the sanctuary a place of healing, a house of bread, a rock of cooling streams; to make of every service a season of refreshing—for all this are we responsible to the King who sent us out to His suffering children. The message He entrusted to us contains the sufficiency for it all!

But more, we repeat, than the mere letter of the message is needed. The best of words may be so spoken as to bring but small assistance to such as hear. Again we say that the preacher must, himself, live in the comfort and courage he preaches to others, or else there will be somewhat in his voice that will spoil it all. The word and also the *tone!* "The tone" must be the tone of absolute realisation and assurance. Pronounced in any other accent the words of the Gospel of joy sound impossible; the blessings they promise seem dim and far away; the fact of providence becomes a mere theory; the future harvest of holy sowing a pious but foolish hope; the sweet fields of Eden a fair but airy dream. Nothing is colder than perfunctory, official, professional consolation and encouragement. When

fear whispers "Courage!" the chattering of his teeth makes our terror worse!

So, once again, the preacher's success and effectiveness are found largely to depend upon his own heart's condition. The message will carry little more cheer than the messenger can pour into it out of the stored up happiness and confidence of his own breast. In the cheer of God must he abide who would scatter a little comfort among his fellow men!

BOOK III

THE MESSAGE:—
ITS FORM AND DELIVERANCE

THEORY OF BOOK III.

We have spoken of the Effective Preacher and of the Effective Message, but this Message must have Effective Form and Expression in order to command the Largest Measure of Success.

What are the Essentials of Effectiveness in the Form and Delivery of the Message?

CHAPTER I.

On Attractiveness.

HAVING now given some little thought to a consideration of the essential qualifications of the Christian messenger, and also to the content of his message, it remains to name certain qualities of form and expression equally needed for success in the publication of the truth. The first business of the preacher is, of course, to secure the friendly attention of his hearers and his next business is to retain it until he makes an end of speaking. To accomplish these things it is obviously needful that he possess some skill in the putting of things in such a way as first to attract, then to enlighten, and finally, to persuade.

In beginning then, a very brief inquiry concerning these qualities, it may be assumed that in the sermon as we know it we have by far the best vehicle for the conveyance of the preacher's message. From time to time experiments with other media have been tried, but the sermon has not been superseded. A few years ago trial was made of what was called the Sermon-story—a religious

novel read by the preacher in weekly parts. "Song services" and "lantern addresses" have been well-intentioned attempts to enlist the ear and the eye in the interests of the soul. In the miracle plays of the Middle Ages, Scriptural truth and incident were thrown into dramatic form for the benefit of the ignorant classes. The sermon still holds the field. No form of preaching has use and acceptance so general, nor so lends itself to meet changing times and differing circumstances as does this. The thought is no less true than wonderful, and no less wonderful than true, that of all who appeal to the public ear, none, even in these days of comparative indifference to religion, draw so large an audience as do the preachers of the Christian faith. The sermon is still the most popular form of public address!

It will be wise therefore for the preacher not only to ask as to whether he possesses within himself a preaching mind and heart and knowledge and designation; whether he can say that he seeks to present the truth in all its completeness, but also whether his *sermons* are of such a sort as most readily to secure the entrance of the truth they contain. God's truth may be—and often is—hindered in its saving errand by reason of the form and manner in which it is presented, though, behind such ineffective presentation, there may be sincerity of motive and sublime enthusiasm. The preacher may fail as a messenger by failing

as a sermoniser. He may fail as a sermoniser from neglect of principles which so wait upon his discovery that it is nothing less than a mystery when they are not seen.

And yet, obvious as these principles are, the art of the sermon maker needs learning, and even the study of methods of delivery is of immense importance to success. We have spoken of "the born preacher"; even *he* must cultivate his gifts in order to realise his highest possibilities. We speak sometimes of "diamonds in the rough"; the value of these precious stones increases as the art of the lapidary is carefully exercised upon them. If it be only to prevent the formation of false methods and bad habits of thought and utterance, a preacher should give attention to the study of Homiletics. He may, as the end of all his studies, feel led deliberately to reject much of what he has been taught in favour of original methods of his own. As the years go on he may forget many of the rules laboriously learned. Neither of these circumstances should be held to prove that time spent in the sermonising class has been wasted. It is a fact that most of us have forgotten the greater part of what we learned at school. The dates which made up so large a part of our historical lessons, the rules we slavishly committed as we struggled to master the difficulties of syntax and prosody, our latinity, our grounding in the tongue of ancient Greece so hardly won—who amongst us,

having grey hairs in abundance, could face to-day the examination room where once we triumphed in these things? Yet in a sense they are all still with us. We reproduce them in effectiveness in the daily battle; in the thousand and one duties forming the work of life. It may be much the same in the case of homiletics. We may reject; we may forget; but we cannot altogether fail to profit richly in many ways from studies the object of which is to make the student more skilful in the use of the powers bestowed upon him. Had these pages been written for young men only, they would have contained more than one chapter devoted to an effort to enforce the absolute necessity of bending the mind, and with the mind the heart, to the earnest pursuit of all that can be learned about the actual building-up of discourses from the foundation of exegesis to the topstone of application. We do not refrain from emphasising this necessity because of any thought that even the elder brethren will find such studies without profit. To read once more some of the homiletic manuals of our far-off days, would not be for many of us a foolish method of spending a quiet hour "between the mount and multitude!"

To these books, with others more recently published, we refer the reader who is on the look-out for "rules." In our youth there were many of them:—"Kidder," "Phelps," "Broadus," "Beecher," "Parker's Ad Clerum." Add to these

"Phillips Brooks," "Dale," "The Cure of Souls," and as many more as can be remembered; their name is legion—all helpful to wise men and good. *Our* present duty seems to be that of naming certain principles which must be remembered by all who would attain to effectiveness in pulpit expression.

And the first of these principles seems to be this:—That the sermon should have the quality of *attractiveness*, that it ought to be so interesting that the man in the pew will *wish* to listen to it, find it harder *not* to listen than to attend to its every word. You will never save or help a man if you never interest him!

Now, whether there be need to emphasise this very obvious consideration we may judge from the talk we hear about sermons in general. We have already spoken of the wonderful popularity of this form of public address; but this popularity is not unqualified by complaints, the most frequent of which is, perhaps, about the preacher's dulness. "As dull as a sermon" is a familiar expression—so familiar that no one troubles to protest against its use and application. One of our most hoary and patriarchal anecdotes tells of the minister who, finding a burglar in his study, held the man in deep slumber by the reading of last Sunday's discourse while his wife slipped out for the policeman. An American humorist, who has laid us under life-long obligation for hours of honest laughter, tells

us, in the history of his courtship of Betsy Jane, that her folks and his "*slept* in the same meeting house." Again and again have we heard of the risks run by insurance companies in granting fire policies upon the houses of the clergy, because of the immense quantities of very dry material they contain. All these humorous stories and sallies find appreciation because there is, alas! a certain amount of truth at the heart of them. Then there is also that demand for shorter sermons in which some see so ominous a portent. We demur to the assumption that this demand invariably grows out of dislike for the subjects upon which the preacher dilates. It is objected that no one grumbles greatly concerning the length of a Shakespearian representation, nor when a prominent and eloquent politician occupies the platform for an hour and a half. A little while ago, in a crowded hall in London, we heard a well-known statesman speak for two hours and a quarter on a busy Saturday afternoon, and, at the conclusion, hundreds were heard to express surprise on learning that the address had been half so lengthy. "If we preached as long as this what would happen?" asked a friend as we left the hall. "*What*," *indeed?* But suppose that we preached as *interestingly* as the politician spoke? Suppose we had learned something from the great dramatist of the art of assailing and winning the attention of the men and women to whom we speak? It must not be

forgotten, when we find fault with the demand for short sermons, that there are some preachers from whom their hearers demand not short sermons but long! Perhaps this demand for brevity may not result so much from the depravity of the pew as from the dulness of the pulpit, by which we mean the sermon and not its subject. At this very moment, there is no subject—we dare to say—on which the average man can be so deeply moved as on the subject of his spiritual needs and questions. It can still be said that more people attend the churches and chapels of London than are to be found in all other places of popular resort. The things of the spirit are still the things most thought of, and should those whose business it is to speak of them fail to win, at least the ear, if not the heart, of those they seek to influence, they ought to ask themselves very faithfully whether it may not be possible that some of the fault may lie in the form, or wording, or delivery of the message. They should inquire whether sermon and delivery are such as to make it easier to listen than to sleep. They should ask, "*Can it be that even I am guilty of being dull?*"

For the truth must be confessed that some preachers—brethren with golden truth to publish, and possessed of good natural gifts and a real and deep desire to bless the people—*are* dull—drearily, dreadfully, deadly dull! They are dull with the most interesting, the most wonderful—may we not

say the most sensational?—subject in the world to talk about.

And what is the cause of this dulness? Again we say it does not lie in the nature of the subjects committed to the preacher. To this denial we will add another to the effect that, in almost every instance, the dulness of the sermon does not proceed from a quality of dulness in the preacher. There are few men who, in conversation, are unable to interest us in subjects of intrinsic attractiveness. Many a man, dull to boredom in the pulpit, becomes a delightful personality in the social circle. Why the startling difference?

To answer this question fully might involve the use of many words, but it may, at least, be suggested that preaching is often dull because the preacher has inherited a notion that reverence for the truth and for the sanctuary demands it. There still remain traces of a feeling, said to have been common in old time, that dulness is a virtue. This same feeling was wont, in other days, to fill the homes of the godly with a gravity and a solemnity which almost effected the banishment of laughter and drove forth music as an outcast from the domestic hearth. Dominated by this sense of things, men shut their eyes to the joyfulness of life and the beauties of nature and literature and poetry and art. The Sabbaths of such men were days to be feared; their sanctuaries places without a gleam of sunshine. What wonder if the pulpit came

under the yoke of bondage, or that, having been once enslaved, it should even now have hardly attained to perfect freedom? Then there are preachers whose great concern is to maintain "the dignity of the pulpit," and this concern is allowed to crush out their naturalness and brightness and humour—every quality that is human and pleasant and alluring. It is on record that even so great and wise a preacher as Dr. Dale of Birmingham had to confess that his own mighty ministry had suffered because of a certain stateliness of composition and delivery which had militated against the attractiveness of his sermons, especially so far as the younger and less educated of his hearers were concerned. From this solicitude for the dignity of the pulpit have come "the pulpit manner," "the pulpit tone," "the pulpit vocabulary," all of which, as being departures from honest Nature's homely plans, have helped to spoil the charm and prevent the triumph of holy, lovely truth. Still another may be dull from intellectual pride. Not unknown is the man who may often be heard explaining the success attained by other brethren but denied to himself, by references to what he calls "playing to the gallery" or "catering for popular applause." *He*, forsooth, will not so demean himself as to be guilty of practices so degrading. Thought is *his* provision for those who come to hear. *He* appeals to *thinkers*. Alas! for him, his "thinkers," if only he knew it,

are human and have a mind to be pleased. "Very intellectual," may be the verdict with which they leave the church, but people cannot always be on the intellectual rack, and both the Sabbath and the Sanctuary were designed for rest for weary brains. We have known a very learned man to admit, as he came away from hearing an exceedingly thoughtful discourse, that, to him, the preacher's address to the children had been the most enjoyable part of the service. The sermon was very clever; but—well, he had had a hard and trying week of it, and came to church with a tired mind and a troubled heart.

So it has come to pass that many a preacher has fallen into a homiletic dulness quite foreign to his own disposition. In the home, the social circle, in every place saving the pulpit he was human and natural. He had a jest to cheer the depressed, a tear for sorrow. He could rejoice with those who rejoiced, weep with those who wept. He was responsive to the piping of gladness. In pain or pleasure he was ever a welcome guest, but in the temple he condemned by tone and manner every bit of humanity into which he had been unwittingly betrayed, and atoned for his every lapse into naturalness by dreariness growing drearier. Not so did Jesus Christ preach, else the common people had not "heard Him gladly;" not so, else the little children had not gathered around His feet, nor shouted their Hosannas as he rode up

to the city gate. Not dull were those sermons that drew the multitudes from the towns to the wilderness, and held them so entranced that the time for bodily refreshment passed unheeded by. "Never man spake like this Man," they said, as they spread their garments in the path by which the preacher came up to Mount Zion. He revealed God; He rebuked sin; He poured His denunciations upon the age; He tore off the mask from the face of hypocrisy; not one jot or tittle of truth did He bate for the sake of applause, yet all Judea went out to Him, and all the regions beyond Jordan. In *His* preaching there was not only everything to save the soul, there was everything to charm the ear!

From this divine example, if from no other consideration, let us set ourselves to preach attractively; and let us begin by resolving to preach *naturally*. The best preaching is talk at its best in subject and in style, and provides exercise for every talent of preacher and hearer alike. "Right here," as the Americans say, let us remember that talk is always spoken and never read. For the production of the effect of dulness; for the sure spoiling of good thought nobly conceived and nobly phrased, commend us to a manuscript slavishly read to an audience assembled to be *spoken to* by a man who was appointed to *speak*. There may be churches which, through long suffering, have become so used to being read to that they have learned to endure it, perhaps even to fancy they like it. But watch

the congregation in such a church. Note when for a moment the preacher lifts his head and ventures a brief excursion from the sheets before him, how obviously their interest quickens and their eyes brighten. Even *they*, in the depths of their hearts, would rather be spoken to, though such a practice might mean, now and then, a little looseness in expression, a little breakdown in the preacher's grammar. More than this may be said:— It has seemed to us, as the result of attending many churches, that in such sanctuaries as we have referred to reading is going out of fashion. We have listened of late months to many well-known preachers of various denominations and not one of them "read." On the other hand, we have heard it asserted that while the method of reading becomes less common in these churches, it tends to become more usual in Methodism. Alas! for Methodist preaching if this startling assertion be really true. Methodism does *not want* the read sermon—is not likely, unless it ceases to be Methodism, to learn to want it—will only endure it when it cannot help itself, or when, for other reasons, it has great reverence and affection for the man who weakly offers it; or again, when the preacher is old and has outlived his intellectual nimbleness, in which case sympathy may so plead his cause as to secure him a reluctant hearing. Methodism grew to greatness under the preaching of men who *spoke*, and that method is traditional

to her pulpit; some day she will crystallise her tradition into a law that the *speaker* alone shall stand in her high place. To attract and hold the people the preacher must speak!

And let him speak in the voice and manner with which it is most natural for him to speak to his fellow men. There is as yet no organ sweeter than the human voice in its own natural tones, none so adapted to reach the heart. The pity is, that so often, from simple ignorance, this fine instrument is spoiled. Gladly would we see a course of voice tuition included as a necessary part of all pulpit training. So would the spoiling of many a gracious utterance be prevented. It is faulty methods of speech rather than overwork that are responsible for many a "clergyman's sore throat." Speaking is as natural an exercise to the voice of a man as is walking to his feet, or handling to his hands, but it must be done naturally; and the use of training is found in its bringing home this lesson. The "pulpit voice" must become a yesterday's blunder.

To attractiveness in delivery must be added, if people are to be kept in audience, an attractiveness in treatment; here, again, the method of success is to let Nature have her way. Let the preacher permit himself to devote *all* his gifts to the setting forth of his theme. The great thing is to get the word right home and to that end all considerations as to style, language, arrangement, should be subordinate. There be some highly

intellectual persons who affect contempt when a preacher tells a story. There are very solemn persons who gravely disapprove when the sermon contains a touch of humour which causes a ripple of laughter in the holy place. Some people, again, hate an epigram, and say "the preacher is trying to be smart." It is impossible to please all the critics. The great business of the preacher is to get his work done; and if by a story, a touch of humour or of sarcasm, the use of any gift, he can, keeping within the limits of that good taste which should guide him at all times, entice men to listen, the critics may be ignored.

One more paragraph may be added before bringing this chapter to an end. After all, the great secret of being interesting lies in being *interested*. The really enthralling preacher is he who is himself enthralled by his subject and who realises, also, a deep interest in the people before Him. Should it ever come to pass that the subject grow stale, worn and hackneyed to the man in the pulpit, it will not be a hopeful quest to look for much interest in the pew. Again should it ever come to pass that the preacher lose interest in those before whom he stands, and this has been known to occur, there will remain small reason to listen to him for preaching of the sort we most desire. May it not be possible that "the sermon-box" is responsible for much of the dulness we deplore. Whitefield, it is said, used to contend that a man could preach the

same discourse forty-nine times with ever-increasing effect. There may be some who have not this power, but who faithfully toil to prove the truth of the dictum. It was such a good sermon and went so well when we preached it the first few times, the while our hearts were fired by the truth it taught. So we whispered to ourselves as we turned over the contents of that precious box. Other days had come, other circumstances, other people, other needs and other views, but forth came the well-worn and faded manuscript once again. A baptism of holy madness in which every preacher should make a fire of all his sermons dry enough to burn might not be a bad thing for the Church and the world. Such a baptism may, perhaps, be too great a thing to pray for; such a sacrifice as it would involve, may possibly be too much to ask—and some sermons *are* worth preaching over and over again, even long after Whitefield's maximum has been exceeded. Still there is a dangerous temptation in the possession of hoarded sermons from which we will do well to pray to be delivered. To that petition thousands in all the churches would be glad to say Amen!

CHAPTER II.

On Transparency.

THERE is one quality of such vital importance to the effectiveness of our sermons as to merit more than passing mention, and that is the quality of lucidity. The business of the preacher is to make his meaning understood, to make his audience see what he sees, understand what he understands. It is laid upon him as a special instruction to present the truth with such plainness that "a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." Failing here, he fails badly. It is possible, perhaps, to excite a hearer's admiration without clearness. There is to be found in some men a curious liking for being puzzled; and they will credit with high talent and deep learning him who is able thoroughly to mystify them. We have more than once heard a man described as "far learned" because of a style in which polysyllables, not always correctly chosen, did duty for thought, as polysyllables often do. But the mere winning of ignorant admiration is a poor result of pulpit work, and no manly man will set such an end before him as the goal of his ambition. Admit that hearers may

receive a measure of blessing out of all proportion to the degree of their understanding—a friend of ours tells us that he has had wonderful times in listening to sermons in the Welsh language of which he knows not a word,—it still remains true that men are saved through the *knowledge* of the truth. In joining himself to the Eunuch from Ethiopia who, sitting in his chariot read the Prophet Esaias, Philip asked, " Understandest thou what thou readest ? " and all his effort went to make the dusky stranger comprehend. To make men understand, is our bounden duty still.

And to accomplish this necessary achievement is not invariably the easiest thing imaginable. Indeed, it may well be contended that in none of his aims does the preacher fail more frequently than in this. Often would we be greatly surprised and deeply discouraged had we the means of comparing the idea *received* with the idea we meant to convey. The reticence of our hearers is wisdom in them and mercy to us.

For it is absolutely certain that most preachers overestimate—we do not say the intelligence of their congregations,—but their ability to grasp the truth presented at the speed, and in the way in which it is brought before them. Because the trained mind of the preacher can readily and easily understand religious literature and speech, it does not follow that the hearer has the same power ; nor does it follow that the lack of it proves him a person

of smaller intellectuality than the man whose utterances bring perplexity to his mind. The preacher should remember that what are matters of daily thought and research to him are not so familiar to his hearers. To *him* they form a well-known country. He should not assume that the man who turns to him for direction as to the points and places of this holy land will always be able to comprehend these directions as easily as he gives them. We speak from experience when we assert that it is much easier, in a land one knows very well, to direct the traveller on his way than it is to understand such directions when, from strangeness in the path, we have in turn to seek them ourselves.

Not only is this true, but it is also true that we are too apt to take for granted that what is knowledge to the preacher is knowledge to the hearer. It is to be feared that in these days the average churchgoer is not so well versed in Biblical knowledge as the assumptions of our sermons might suggest. Most men nowadays live in a hurry, and are busy about many things, and it cannot be pretended that the Scriptures receive that reading and study which give such advantage to the hearer of preaching. Probably an examination of any ten men chosen without discrimination out of the congregation of one of our churches would reveal a state of things both startling and sad. It is so easy to be misled by appearances. The congregation is well dressed, respectable, keen. There are the usual signs of

education, even of culture. All these things are consistent with great shallowness of sacred knowledge. Men are careful to till their own fields, but common land is generally sorely neglected. There is a scientist in yonder pew ; in his own science he is supreme. Near him sits a politician ; few there are who know the questions of the hour better than he. In the pulpit stands the preacher ; he is—shall we venture the assertion ?—a man mighty in the Bible. It is *his book*. It is, in a *general* way, the book of the scientist, of the statesman, of every person in the congregation, but the preacher specialises in it and in all that relates to it. He will make a mistake if he assumes too much either to the credit of one man before him or another. Here a memory of many years ago rises to the surface. Having to preach one Sunday to an audience which usually contained two or three men of positions rather above the common run, we confessed great nervousness to an aged minister of our church now no more. " Never bother a bit, lad," was the reply ; " remember one thing :—You will know more about that subject than any man in the chapel, because you will have been *working* at it. The doctor will have spent *his* week mixing physic, the lawyer *his* in mixing law. You will have spent *yours* in getting to know all about this text of which, like as not, neither of them has ever heard." There was consolation in the old man's assurances, though they recognised a sorrowful fact too often forgotten. Probably if

we knew everything we should come to the conclusion that one fault of our sermons is that they are not half sufficiently elementary.

Along the same line follows the remark, that it is also a mistake to assume that the terminology familiar to the preacher and conveying to *his* mind certain ideas, must of necessity be equally familiar and convey the very same ideas to every other man. Much of this language is technical; much of it consists of words and phrases which have long been obsolete so far as daily use and wont are concerned. Let the preacher set himself to listen to a professional man who elects to speak upon the subjects in which he is most interested in the language of his profession; or let him hearken to an artisan who talks about his craft in the terms in use at the bench, or in the factory, and then he will in some degree comprehend the effect of technical language in mystifying the uninitiated hearer. We recall in this connection a sermon in which, years ago, we heard a very young preacher declaiming to an audience of labouring men and women concerning a certain "anthropomorphic" passage. As we say he was very young, and probably no longer uses the word outside the study. Another worthy man in our hearing solemnly advised a congregation largely composed of factory girls to make their lives "Christo-centric." We acknowledge our indebtedness to the Rev. W. L. Watkinson, himself a splendid example of the

excellence for which we plead, for two humorous illustrations of the mistake now being considered. One is that of a local preacher who, during a revival of religion, most earnestly counselled his auditors to exercise "fiduciary" faith; the other, of a learned divine whose appointment in a certain village coincided with the visit of a travelling menagerie. "I perceive," he said, in sensational tones, "that a spirit of German transcendental ratiocination is creeping into the Church." The congregation, remembering the adjacent caravans, left at once in hurry and alarm.

In that very interesting volume in which the proprietors of *The Daily News* tabulated the results of a census of church attendance in the metropolis, Mr. F. C. Masterman, writing on the religious problem of South East London, has the following words :—

"The prevailing theology, even more perhaps than the prevailing liturgy, is wrapped up in an ancient language. The very terms are technical—grace, justification, conversion, perseverance. They flow out glibly from the student who has soaked himself in their historical meanings; they are Greek to the general. They were once living realities for which men fought and gladly died; they still symbolise realities, the permanent elements of the life history of the soul—but they are wrapped around in cobwebs and the complications of a technical system, frozen into sterility; and they

have no more meaning and no more appeal to the audience at whom they are thrown in such profusion than the details of the performance of the Mosaic ritual, or the genealogies of the legendary heroes of the Hebrew Bible. We want neither edifying lessons drawn from the wanderings of Israel or the Book of Joshua; nor brilliant 'word-painting' of some of the scenes described in the Bible with a more appealing eloquence; nor the exposition of the machinery of schemes of salvation once real from which the life has departed; but some message concerning the things of the spirit, delivered in simplicity and humility and sincerity to men who would fain be simple and humble and sincere." These are weighty words, and many a preacher might do worse than take them seriously to heart. Such an event might mean the blessing of many who have so far been mystified rather than edified. Mr. Masterman represents, we are sure, multitudes who could add proof to his words from frequent experience; he speaks, also, for many more who, because of similar experience, come no more to the house of the Lord.

But the difficulty does not always arise from the preacher's terminology alone. It is possible to fall into the fault of *over-condensation* in our preaching. Highly concentrated foods are proverbially hard of digestion, and the same may be true of highly concentrated sermons. "Words packed with profoundest meanings" are apt to

pass over the mind carrying much of their meaning with them undiscovered. A "highly sententious style" may have some of the qualities of a thunder shower, in which the rain falls so fast as to be of little use in watering the thirsty ground, over which it courses unabsorbed to join the brook down yonder in the vale. The maxim "*multum in parvo*" may be an admirable one for an author whose book will lie in the reader's hand the while he has time to grasp the full significance of every well-filled sentence. By a public speaker, however, packing may easily be overdone; and here is one of the dangers of the written sermon as compared with one in which the preacher, having gathered together his knowledge and his thought upon a matter, leaves the choice of words to the hour of delivery. A little wise prolixity may be necessary to the speaker. A little repetition; the putting of a truth, first in *this* way, then in *that*, and again perhaps in quite a different fashion, so that different minds may have in turn their chance—even this may be needed, and though the preacher's impatience may find such a method irksome, duty may lie that way while inclination turns to a more sententious and expeditious mode. When all has been done that can be done to render every argument and lesson absolutely transparent there will still be some who will not have quite understood. The simplest of preachers must some day encounter the old lady who accosted, so it is said, a former Bishop of Chester, who, at great pains to be lucid,

had unfolded the argument against the errors of atheism, with the words, "Well, my lord, I must say as I think there is a God after all you've told us."

Another thing to be remembered is, that much depends upon the order and arrangement of a sermon whether it is "easy to follow" or not. We are old-fashioned enough to believe rather strongly in the method according to which the preacher divided his subject into "heads." We had heard that this method was falling into disuse, but have been surprised during recent months to discover how many of the more acceptable and successful preachers still find it the most effective plan. Of course there are those who vote the method out of date; and we have listened to the preaching of some who hold this view and act upon it. Our experience teaches us that in respect of clearness and, perhaps especially, of memorability, the method of distinct division has many advantages. It is easier to the preacher; *much* easier to the hearer. Only, let it be remembered that an "introduction" should introduce; that "divisions" should divide, and sub-divisions sub-divide. Needless and trifling "majors" or "minors" are irritating and confusing. "Firstly," "Secondly," "Thirdly," and—under very special circumstances—even "Fourthly" may contribute to the making of the dark places plain, but the days have long since passed away in which "Ninthly" and "Tenthly" could be borne; though there have

actually been such days. We have read, or tried to read, discourses whose major divisions ran to "eighteenthly" with minor divisions grouped under each like companies in a regiment. People came to preaching early in those days and stayed late. Can it be one result of their experiences that we, their posterity, have inherited that strange weariness which so frequently attacks us as "One word more" is announced from the sacred desk?

Simplicity in language, and in putting things; as much repetition as may be needed; great care not to assume more knowledge in the hearer than he possesses; much allowance for the fact that the minds addressed may not be trained in the theme under discussion, and that there is a wide difference between the catching of an idea which waits upon a printed page and of an idea in flight of spoken discourse; clear and memorable arrangement of the whole address—all these concessions must be made if men are to be sent away from the sanctuary carrying with them any considerable part of the provision with which the preacher climbed the pulpit stair. And after all these concessions have been allowed the *great* effort to make things plain has yet to be begun!

This *great effort* for the attainment of transparency will be made, we need hardly say, along two lines, the line of illustration and the line of application. Possibly it may be held by some that these two lines are really one.

And concerning illustration:—The greatest preachers, and the most effective, have been those who have shown the greatest mastery of this art. The writing of these words brings to our minds names sufficient to establish their truth. Who can forget the illustrations of C. H. Spurgeon; the illustrations of McLaren of Manchester, whose expositions of Scripture received illumination in this way at every turning of the path along which the preacher led us, happy and entranced? It has been pronounced by some a mistake to class D. L. Moody among the *great* preachers. The answer will depend upon our definition of a great preacher. *We* would support the inclusion and our reason lies here:—We heard the man in boyhood and so clear, by simplicity and aptness of language, of phrase and of illustration did he make his every contention, that we understood him from beginning to end. An example happily still with us has already been named in the earlier part of this chapter. Every preacher should hear the Rev. W. L. Watkinson, if he walk a score of miles to do it!

But the art of illustration, excepting in those rare cases where a man brings to its learning a natural gift waiting only to be brought into use, is not easily acquired. Every preacher of experience will be prepared to testify that in attempting to illustrate it is not only easy to make mistakes but difficult to avoid making them at times. Sometimes an illustration, intended to light up a subject, rather takes

away the thought of a congregation from that subject than otherwise. Sometimes, again, the illustration may be found to carry other suggestions than were intended. The lad, to whom the wisdom of early rising was sought to be illustrated by the good fortune of the early bird in securing the first worm, drew precisely the opposite moral, holding that the fate of the worm taught the wisdom of remaining in bed until a later hour. Then an illustration may be even less clear than the argument to be illustrated. We have heard scientific illustrations of this character, from which the hearer derived a supplementary dose of mystification rather than an elucidation of the problem with which he was already manfully grappling. An illustration may be too pathetic, and people may weep from the wrong cause, an event which often occurs in church. It is one thing to shed tears over a touching story and another to shed them from penitence. An illustration should not be more sublime than the lesson to be taught lest there follow a swift descent with loss of reverence by the way. There is a place for humour in the pulpit, if it be natural to the preacher and flow spontaneously, but a humorous illustration requires to be very carefully chosen, lest, instead of the healthy and holy laughter often so fatal to anger and meanness and pride, you have the guffaw in which blessing is lost in excess. Other reflections as to illustrations are the following:—First, the illustration, if a story, ought at least to contain the

element of probability. No preacher can *always* satisfy himself as to the literal truth of a story he may hear and wish to use, but he can, at least, consider whether the event recounted was possible. We have heard stories from the pulpit which were so hard to swallow as to leave no room for the moral. We have heard illustrations in sermons which have led to criticisms wherein the strength of the preacher's imagination has not been passed over unrecognised. Further, an illustration derives power from being drawn from sources familiar to those to whom it is addressed. In some confessions regarding his early ministry, Henry Ward Beecher enforces this very lesson in telling of his failure to impress the people until he turned for his illustrations to fields well known to them. Who has not seen a farm-labouring audience lift their heads when a preacher, saying, "It is like," has led his hearers into the fields where they had toiled during the previous week? Often have we seen a mining congregation captured *en bloc* when some brother miner, speaking in native doric from the wagon at a camp meeting, has taken them "doon the pit," or "in bye." We have watched the faces of sea-going men gleam with a new interest as the preacher drew a simile, or caught a metaphor from the mighty deep. Only, in using such illustrations as these, let the user be quite certain that he is *accurate*. One mistake about the farm, the mine, the sea, and all is over! With accuracy as

a quality constantly present, those illustrations are most effective whose material is most homely and familiar. Things startling, novel and foreign, may arouse interest and excite wonder, but it will probably be at the expense of that realisation of truth which was sought to be created. Jesus said "Like unto leaven," "Like to a grain of mustard seed," "Behold a sower went forth to sow," "Consider the lilies of the field." His hearers saw these things every day. Perhaps they were in view as He spoke. Finally, the less hackneyed our illustrations are, the better. If this were more generally remembered we would miss, and that with a sense of relief, a few grey-headed similes which, having haunted our youth, threaten to haunt also our age; and which have assailed us so often as to create the kind of familiarity that breeds contempt. In how many Sunday school addresses—and a Sunday school address is preaching in a way—in how many such addresses have we seen the twig bent; in how many the giant oak which none can train? How often have we heard of that boy in Holland who saved his country by the simple expedient of pushing his finger into a hole in the dyke through which the dammed-up waters had begun to escape? There is that other lad, too, who has come down in history by reason of his insane resolve to climb "one niche the higher"—how often have we been told his thrilling story? These two boys are no longer young and have surely earned an honourable superannuation. That little incident

of Michael Angelo and the block of marble from which he "let the angel out"—even that improving narrative might with advantage be pigeon-holed for a generation or two. The reason why these hardy perennials are seen in the gardens of so many preachers must surely be, that every "Treasury of Illustrations" contains them. We have nothing to say in praise of such treasuries. We have none to recommend for purchase. The best treasury of illustrations is the memory of that man who keeps his eyes and ears open and has a preaching mind.

Following the naming of illustration as a means of lighting up the sermon comes the mention of application. Truth must be related to be understood. How wonderfully the application of a truth to familiar circumstances makes it clear. It may be laboriously defined and leave but a dim and indistinct impression upon the mind; but apply it to the age, to the life of men; show its relation to the passing days, to daily duties, daily trials, daily sins, and how deeply is it impressed. In the greater shops are models whose business it is to "show off" the gown the shopkeeper wishes to sell by wearing it before the possible purchaser. The advantage of the plan is obvious. We must show truth *in the wear* to make it understood!

After all these reflections, the fundamental word still remains to be said:—*Clear preaching can only come from clear thinking.* What we see *ourselves* we may, by great effort and rare good fortune, make

others see; but when the preacher only beholds men as trees walking, how can he make clear their features to his fellows? The foggy sermon often proves the preacher's possession of a foggy mind. "If the light that is in *thee* be darkness, how great is that darkness," so said One of old.

CHAPTER III.

On Appeal.

IT is set before us in this last chapter of our lecture to say something in reference to appeal as an essential quality of the sermon. The discourse, it must always be borne in mind, is not an end in itself, but a means to an end, and that end the bending of the human will to "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." To the full and perfect surrender which this implies men are found to be opposed in every possible way. Pride is against it; selfishness is against it; self-indulgence and the lusts of the flesh are against it. Often, in addition to these natural elements of opposition, a man's reluctance to yield himself to God will be fortified by tradition and strengthened by association. A hundred circumstances affecting his life, his comfort, his general well-being may seem to encourage, almost necessitate his refusal. Then, again, the teaching of all scripture goes to create and establish the belief that there are supernatural prompters of the sinner in his rebellion against God; that the warfare of the preacher for his

deliverance is not against flesh and blood only, but also "against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places." We do not always quite realise all that it may mean to a man to take the step to which we invite him—sometimes so lightly. To begin the following of Christ, or, having already begun that following, to arise from slackness to whole-hearted service, may involve the snapping of long cherished ties and an absolute revolution in every habit and mode of life and thought. By many men the Kingdom of Heaven can only be entered at the cost of what seems to them a stupendous sacrifice and the facing of what appears an appalling risk. Against all these forces and considerations has the preacher to prevail, and that, through no compulsive power, but by exercise of such gifts of persuasion as are given unto him to be cultivated to that end, God's Spirit helping his efforts. He is here to make men *do*—do that which on every earthly account they had rather not do. Unless he accomplishes this result his work has been in vain.

Now, it is well that the nature of the work, its greatness and the hardness of it, should be fully realised and constantly remembered. There is always a danger of being misled by the shows of incomplete, or false, success. In no branch of service is this more true than in preaching. It is such a glorious thing to be able to gather great congregations; but even this may be done and the messenger

fail. It is such a delightful thing to a preacher to watch a multitude waiting spellbound beneath his eloquence in rapt attention, or swept by waves of emotion; but that multitude may disperse, the great end of preaching still unwrought and the whole attempt a splendid failure. It is possible to attract people to your preaching, possible to win the crown of their approval, and yet come short of accomplishing the very results for which you were commissioned from on high. To please is one thing; to prevail against the heart of sin another.

And with the recollection of this much-to-be-remembered truth it will be well that a sense of the difficulty of the real task should abide continually with us. Some of these difficulties, we have already mentioned. The hardest to overcome are the obstacles within the mind and heart of the hearer himself. It is always finally *the man* who has to be conquered. This, we surely know through our own spiritual experiences. He is bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. Here is surely one reason why the Master sets men to preach to men:—Because every preacher has been himself a rebel and knows the way rebellion takes in heart and brain. Ours also was once the stubborn will; ours the stiff neck; ours the evil heart of unbelief. We, as well as he whom we now assail for Jesus' sake, have said, "I will not have this man to reign over me." Once upon a time we, also, bore ourselves proudly and

contemptuously. Never are we weary of thinking of the wonder that ever we were brought to ground our arms at the Master's feet. Will the winning of others be easier than was the victory won over ourselves? Now that we battle against what once we were and did, we should understand from memory the immensity of the task. Once realised, it should never be forgotten. There is no miracle in all the Gospel history greater than the miracle of a broken human will.

Yes, the preacher's work is at the best a supremely hard one. The sense of this hardness must get into his soul, or else all hope of success will be vain. Should there ever come to him a moment in which it shall appear an easy thing to preach, or when his knowledge of the congregation awaiting him shall seem to indicate that "anything will do," then let him, in that moment, consider himself in peril of missing the true end of his calling. *Anything will not do.* The very best will hardly do! Think of the hardness of the heart! Think of the arguments of the tempter! Think how fair and sweet sin often seems! Think of all the sacrifice and self-denial and self-surrender we are asking from men! Here is need for the utmost diligence; for the development of every latent power of persuasion; for the employment of every ounce of energy, of every resource of skill; for the expenditure of every volt of passion the soul can contain. We can only hope to capture the citadel when the

utmost possibilities of attack are brought to bear upon it. Even then the garrison may hold out against us!

And the ultimate possibilities of attack are the ultimate possibilities of appeal. We speak of appeal as a quality that must pervade the whole of the sermon. We have heard counsels on preaching in which advice was given about "*the* appeal" or "the *final* appeal," whereby were meant certain perorative paragraphs; the remainder of the discourse being divided into "introduction," "exegesis," "argument," "illustration," "application." We remember some of these perorative paragraphs, and sometimes we have been tempted to ask whether the same note is struck in the preaching of to-day as was sounded forth in their stirring words. In spite of the homilists the sermon was generally better than their advice concerning its making and its form. The paragraph in question, though, perhaps, neither the preacher nor his adviser suspected the truth, was only powerful because it formed the climax of all that had gone before. It was the final assault following upon processes of sapping and mining, bombardment and fusillade. The appeal must commence *with the first word of the sermon*. The very introduction must be persuasive. The *motif* of the whole composition must be the wooing note. Obviously this note will need to be struck in many keys. The appeal will have many expressions; and in

their variety and form the skill of the preacher will have such room for exercise and such need for it as no other duty of his life displays.

To mention some of the elements of this appeal, of which, again, the whole sermon is the expression:— There is first, that gift, or endowment, or talent— call it what you will—which we speak of as Tact. In some men this power amounts almost to genius. Of such an one we say, "he has a way with him." He is the man to bring about "settlements." His very voice, his very manner, bring disputations to an end. In political conflicts, in social misunderstandings, in labour troubles he is invaluable. In the church he is a treasure. In the Sunday school his price is above rubies. In the pulpit he enjoys an immeasurable advantage. Happy the congregation whose preacher "has a way with him." We have known such men and envied them. Their gift defies analysis. It is an element!

Of men such as these there are, alas, comparatively few! They are born into the world with a genius for always doing the right thing in the right way. Most of us enter into life with a genius for doing everything in the wrong way, and we can only look enviously upon our more richly endowed brethren and learn from them to practise as an art what they do as the result of an inheritance. We *can* do this and, indeed, we *must* do it if it be any part of our life's work to influence men to courses against their minds. The sermon must be tactful

or else, though it possess every other excellence, it will most surely fail. How often have we heard, as a criticism, the one word "tactless," which meant that the truth had been expressed in such language, or in such a manner as to accentuate, rather than allay, the opposition of the hearer; that, instead of getting *round* the prejudices of the congregation by a flanking movement, the preacher had assailed them by a frontal attack, and so called to the ramparts every sleeping power of opposition. Many a well conceived and convincing sermon fails from just this cause.

So then we feel inclined to urge that the cultivation of tactfulness should be reckoned an indispensable part of every preacher's training, for there is no prevailing with men without it. For this, among other things, he will require that thorough understanding of men of which we spoke in an earlier chapter—an understanding which must include a familiarity with their tastes, their prejudices, their weaknesses and infirmities. To this understanding must be added the fruits of much self-study and criticism. To be able so to speak as to secure acceptance for the Word of Life is worth it all. The basis of appeal is conciliation. The instrument of conciliation is tact!

And having, through the exercise of this gift of tact, secured for himself and his message the toleration of the hearer, the preacher will proceed to make the best of the advantage thus obtained.

He has made his man a listener but the great work still remains to be done, and again we say that it is of all work the hardest to accomplish. At once, let us acknowledge the impossibility of outlining a method that will be effective in every case. At once, too, let us say that in no branch of Christian service is so much left to the inventive and initiative faculties of the worker as in preaching. Still some principles there are which may well be named as worthy of remembrance in the day of action.

And the first of these may well be this :—That the first assault should be made through the intellect. The sermon must contain, at least, a solid foundation of good reasoning. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord," was the prophet's invitation to Israel in the day of her rebellion. The preacher should see to it that he "render a reason." It is no compliment to an audience to fail to recognise its mental powers. It is something less than a compliment merely to *pretend* to argue, as is so often done. That is not only to fail to produce the result we desire but to estrange the hearer still further and so make his case more hopeless than before.

It is one of the many accusations made against the modern pulpit, that it has fallen into the habit of begging the question and basing its appeals upon assumptions. Men of mind come to hear the preacher and go away disappointed. The good man declaims, but makes no real attempt to *prove*

the truth of his declamation, or to anticipate the mental difficulties into which his statements may lead the hearer. He makes statements, but does not substantiate them. How often we hear of the intellectual barrenness of the modern sermon! How often we are told that men are asked to take the most important steps, and make the most astounding sacrifices upon arguments which would not convince a seventh standard schoolboy. In speaking of a certain orator, some one said, "There was physical power, for the preacher shouted; ho(a)rse power, for in his roaring he fortunately lost his voice; water power, because he wept most copiously; everything but brain power." We cannot proceed on the exploded fiction that ignorance is the mother of devotion. The schoolmaster is abroad. More than this, the denier is busy, and, though his reasoning may be packed with fallacies, he can only be answered by arguments as sound as his are false. Perhaps there was never a time in which the literature of unbelief had so great and general a currency as it has to-day. It circulates in our workshops in unnumbered pages, for its special attack seems to be directed against our working men, especially the younger members of the class. Here, undoubtedly, is one of the causes of the apparent drift of the toiling masses from the churches. A preaching that is merely declamatory, visionary, emotional; that takes its stand upon tradition, the authority of great

names the dim antiquity of its far-off past, failing, meanwhile, to recognise the eager questioning of the modern man, must be prepared for non-success, though there may come from certain quarters, even in the hour of its failure, the meed of popularity and applause.

Let this, therefore, be laid down:—That the appeal of the sermon must at the beginning be the appeal of intellect to intellect. Let no one be made afraid by this statement. It is not contended that every sermon must be an elaborate argument of the case for the Christian demand. This would necessitate that every preacher be a specialist in theology and apologetics, which is obviously impossible. Happily, the situation, strained as it is, is not such as to render it needful that only experts should venture to preach the gospel. But it *is* needful that the sermon stand the test of common sense and, in that way, carry in it its own defence. It *is* needful that, as the preacher proceeds to develop his subject, the hearer shall find cause to assent to the positions taken up. Otherwise it will be useless to invite him to forsake his own ground in order to share that from which he has been addressed. Of course it must be conceded that even this modest demand will mean much study for the preacher and a careful preparation of the sermon. Surely, however, the end is worth the labour. In no work is proficiency gained without some taking of pains. That preacher who is

afraid of a little toil in order that he may thereby improve his usefulness, and increase his success, should find proof in this fear of effort that his commission—if ever he had one—has expired. One thing is sure :—That a sermon which fails to satisfy the intellect—we do not say of the atheist or the agnostic, to whom, by the way, we are hardly ever called to preach, but of the average hearer—will ask in vain for the surrender of men to God. It may be full of sentiment and overflowing with emotion ; it holds no true appeal !

But the intellect is not the whole of a man. The sermon that contains no appeal to a hearer's emotions will fail, just as certainly as one that contains no address to his reason. If sermons are full of emotion, and empty of arguments, they are invertebrate and produce but transient effects. If the sermon be simply and solely an intellectual effort it will be cold and nerveless and ineffective. You may *convince* a man beyond all possibility of contradiction or protest, and at the same time utterly fail to bring him to the decision you desire him to register. Probably an analysis of most of our congregations would prove that so far as merely intellectual agreement is concerned the great majority of hearers are already on the preacher's side as a result of years of hearing while, as yet, undecided to attempt the path so plainly stretching away before them.

The preacher must address himself to *all* the

emotions of the heart for any one of them may be the means of carrying his message to that innermost chamber whither he desires that it shall come. Fear and courage, doubt and confidence, all should be assailed, for the awakening of any one of them may bring to pass the accomplishment of the preacher's glorious purpose. Of course we have become familiar with all that is said by superior persons about what they are pleased to decry as "mere sentiment." We know, but too well, the man who at once, and invariably, characterises any preaching that touches the hearts of men as "playing to the gallery,"—the man whose one and only demand is for intellectualism. Him we know in his superiority to feeling, his scorn of smiles and tears. We know him and, thank God! we generally ignore him; as we must learn to do more and more. The city of Mansoul has many gates—more, indeed, than honest Bunyan saw—and happy may the preacher be if he can gain admission by any one of them!

Then, although the hearer is "a sinner," and must be approached as such, the sermon that will lead him furthest along the upward way will be one in which it is recognised that he is not so utterly depraved as to be without some lingering, or latent, good to which appeal may, and ought to be made. Find the good in a child and by the use of it lead him to the best, is a sound principle in the training of the young. It is equally sound as a rule for

dealing with their elders. Find the good in a *man* if you would save him wholly and for ever.

For "good" there is, and that in the very worst of men. No doctrine of human depravity that theologians may teach can alter the fact, that, deep in the heart of man, may be found a starting point whence the highest heights may be gained if we have but the skill to lead him forward. We may speak of him as being sick in head and heart, as "full of wounds and bruises and putrifying sores." It is all true and yet, paradoxical as it may appear, there are still in him the power to love; some gift of gratitude; some sense of fair play; an elemental idea of justice. There is still some secret reverence for purity and modesty and truth. The preacher, notwithstanding all the schoolmen may tell him, must believe this, or else he will not effectively preach.

There is much to be gained by every one in believing the best of human nature. For the preacher such a belief will provide ways into the city, the inner fortress of which he means to capture for his Lord. He will call upon the best qualities in his hearer to help him as he pushes home the siege. There is a power of loving. Surely he will enlist the aid of this by reminding the wanderer of the love wherewith *He* has loved him. "We love Him because He first loved us," so wrote one whose will had been brought low what time his affection was entreated. There is a sense

of gratitude. Surely this will be called to look upon that sacrifice on which the ages gaze! That sense of justice; that elementary instinct of fair play—they, too, may be rare colleagues of the messenger, if he will but enlist them on his side. For this method of prosecuting his saving warfare he has precedent enough in the prophets:—"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard! What could have been done more in My vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Here is an appeal to the inborn sense of equity which still lingered in the heart of the chosen people. The claims of honesty and chastity, of truthfulness and benevolence and gentleness will not always be in vain, if the preacher will remember that some reverence for these things still lingers in the heart of even the most abandoned of men and address himself thereto. He is the wisest of all campaigners who enlists the enemy against himself.

To all these elements of human nature, then, the preacher will address himself. He will do more:—He will study times and seasons and events, for times and seasons and events often produce moods which infect a whole people. We have examples of this in the moral influence of the festivals of the Christian year. They were wise men who, for all futurity, connected with certain dates the out-

standing events of the sacred history, the memory of great saints, confessors and martyrs. Probably we of the Nonconformist pulpits might here learn a lesson in homiletic tactics from our friends of the Roman and Anglican churches. There should only be one subject for Good Friday; one for Easter morn; one for Christmastide; one for the hour wherein the old year dies. It is not merely a tribute to convention to observe these seasons. It is strategetically wise to do so. The preacher should use Whitsun as an opportunity of leading the Church to prayer for new pentecosts; harvest time to stir the slumbering thankfulness of men. He who neglects these ready-made chances throws away precious advantage for his appeal and misses the psychological moment.

So much for the seasons and their memories. We have experience, also, of the way in which the watchful and tactful preacher will profit from the occurrences of his time. In the events of the day much material for the pointing of appeal may often be found. The calamities which befall; the happenings which arrest the attention of the multitude and often hush a whole nation with the hush of awe—he will find in these things an opening to be entered on behalf of the enterprise he has in hand. Very watchful must he be, for everything that touches the heart may mean "a way in" which it were a misfortune to miss. He must look for the very slightest change of mood in his people, for

so his long-hoped-for chance may come. With all he may do; after every plea he may still find that the victory is unwon. He has gained the intellect it may be or moved the heart; but the stubborn will still holds out against him.

Yes, notwithstanding all he may do the will may resist him still, but this fact, instead of causing the preacher to give up in despair, should move him to still greater efforts. The more difficult the task, the greater the honour laid upon him who is sent to attempt it. This is the understanding of military life, and this should be the understanding of the preacher. He will not fail with *all*. Some there will be who will ground their arms at Jesus' feet; some who will give themselves to the living of the new life, who will accept the invitation to climb the hills of God. In every one of these the preacher will have ample reward for all his "work of faith and labour of love"; for he who "converteth a sinner from the error of his ways saveth a soul from death and hideth a multitude of sins." To know that he has done these things for one brother man will be better than the breath of popularity. Sweeter than all the compliments of men will be the far-echoing "Well done" of Christ in that day when the messenger lays his commission at His feet.

CONCLUSION

"And ye are witnesses of these things.

"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high.

"And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them.

"And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."—*Luke.*

CONCLUSION.

WE approach, at last, the end of our poor attempt. Its purpose has been to furnish a reminder of some things that are absolutely essential to the effective preaching of the Gospel. Let us recall the steps by which we have come thus far upon our way.

And first, it appeared to us that for true preaching you must have the true preacher; and the true preacher is he who, designated by Nature and by Divine calling, endowment and baptism, has come to personal certainty in respect of the great and vital truths committed to his keeping. Surrendered to God and his work, he nevertheless realises that among the trusts of which he holds stewardship is that of his own individuality to be used for the ends he is sent to consummate. He is a man of understanding gathered in the study of truth; of men; of the Church; of his own heart; of many other fields of knowledge. He lives in constant realisation of the greatness of his calling; the sublimity of his message and the certainty of victory for Israel's side. His soul is aflame with the passion of his

labour; with devotion to his Master; with a love for his fellows learned at the foot of the cross. The supreme fact of his life is the fact of his own spiritual experience and in holy, happy memories he finds continual evidence of things Divine, and constant inspiration to prosecute his mission to the end. He is a man whose heart God has touched for the sake of the world. He is the chosen, qualified, and sworn ambassador of the King of Kings. He is the very representative and mouthpiece of God and of the Church to all with whom opportunity shall give him speech. In all this he is the successor of the first-called and qualified of the preaching band, making proof of his succession by faithfulness, holiness and success. Such is the true preacher, whether separated altogether to the work of the ministry or working with his hands, as did the greatest preacher of the Apostolic band, that he may "not be chargeable to any."

From speaking of the messenger we turned to mention what seem to us to be the notes essential to a complete rendering of the message confided to him for transmission. The notes of accusation and of pity, of idealism and edification and cheer all need to be sounded by the preacher who would go back, at last, to the Lord who sent him with the joyful boast that he has "not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God." Not only this, but we heard, as we came along our way, from the lips of those to whom the preacher would speak, enough

to prove that it is for a message in which these notes are heard that they wait and listen. The world longs for a Gospel which shall satisfy the mind, guide the conscience and comfort the heart, the while it shows the way to the best in the life that is and the life that is to come. Such a Gospel we have. It remains only that we preach it in all its plenitude and promise.

"That we preach it":—Of this actual preaching we have also had something to say, both as to its form and as to certain great principles to be remembered by the messenger always and everywhere. It *does* matter much as to the manner in which the truth is expressed. It is possible to prevent the glorious results the message should produce by avoidable faults in the presentation of it. It is the preacher's duty, for the truth's sake, to make his sermons so attractive and so interesting that hearers shall not be repelled from partaking of the Divine provision for hungry and thirsty souls. It is his duty to make his sermons so simple in phrasing, so intelligible in arrangement, so luminous by illustration that the average hearer shall readily understand them. To the arts of persuasion and appeal he must devote special attention, for the purpose of the sermon is to induce men to believe and to act upon that belief. He must be a master of argument and of tact. He must learn to use every occasion; to find and enter every door; to turn everything to the

advantage of his one great end. The sermon must be at once a work of wisdom, of grace and of art. It is the preacher's weapon in the warfare of his Lord. How carefully it should be fashioned; how bright it ought to be, how sharp, to reach the heart of the King's enemies!

And all these things we have brought to remembrance that, having them before us, we may be the better able to answer the question with which we started out:—Whether this preaching of ours is in any way to blame for that spiritual and moral slide of which we hear so much? Are *we* such men as we have seen that preachers ought to be; so surely designated for our ministry; so wise; so sure; so full of the passion of our calling? Has the message we have sought to deliver expressed the whole that God has taught us and provided an answer to the deep questions and strange perplexing needs of those to whom we have ministered? Have the sermons in which our message has been set forth always been the best attempt we could make to reach the ear, subdue the mind and win the hearts of those who waited upon our utterance? Is there any need for self-reproach on our part, or can we answer all these questions with a gladness increasing with each successive reply? The reader will have a rejoinder ready. We do not ask to hear it. It will be enough that he whisper it to his own soul and into the ear of God. It might be of infinite service to the Church and to our fellows if,

one and all, we pushed such an inquisition to an end in our secret hearts.

There remains now only one word to be added, and that word, the reader will perhaps have looked for earlier, for in every such discussion as the present it must come to utterance. For two reasons we have withheld it until the last and they are these. It is a word with which every reader will agree, and it is the most important word which can be spoken or written upon the subject. Is it necessary to say that it has reference to the deepest and most constant of all the preacher's needs—the need of the Holy Spirit as an abiding presence in his heart, his mind, his work? Little did the Master say, as He charged those early preachers, concerning the methods of their preaching; little also as to its substance, but many were His words concerning the Holy Ghost who was to be their teacher, their remembrancer, their comforter and support. For Him they were to tarry "until the promise be fulfilled."

And they *did* so tarry, and lo, He came and the young men saw visions and the old men dreamed dreams! Then, through the lips of plain, unlettered, toiling men there broke forth a new evangel upon the age which turned all the currents of the world. New things were spoken; new ideals lifted up; new hopes proclaimed, but the secret energy of it all was the new power that thrilled in every word. New things the world had often heard, hopes,

ideals, philosophies; some one was always bringing such wares to market, as they bring them to market still; but scarce a ripple on the sea of life did they one and all produce. These words *lived and burned. Life* was in them, and *fire!* That life and fire were His whose coming had filled the upper room with wind and flame!

The Holy Ghost in the heart of the preacher, and therefore in his message, filling every sermon with unction, spirituality, throb, *life*—can there be effective and successful preaching without THIS? No, never; study you never so hard; train you never so carefully; bring to the work never such talents, such grace of diction, of construction, of delivery. "It is not by might nor by power, but by My spirit saith the Lord"!

And yet there *is* a duty of study and an obligation of training, and it *is* incumbent that the most precious of our gifts be polished and dedicated, that the best possibilities of argument, illustration and delivery be attained. In preaching, as in all the works and ways of life, God helps those who help themselves and nothing is worthy but the noblest and the highest.

The Holy Ghost in the heart of the preacher honoured by the grandest effort the preacher can make, the utmost faithfulness he can display:—Can it be possible that in these words the twofold need of this very hour finds definition? Can we be sure, that if such a sentence were turned into a

prayer, and came back upon us as a gracious answer to cries that would not be denied, the multitudes would not turn to us once again? What preaching would there be *then;* how warm would be the sanctuary; what a house of healing would it become; what a place of consolation and encouragement for hard-pressed men; how many problems would find solution; what visions would form themselves upon the darkened clouds overhanging many a human life! Preaching would be a living thing. Can it be possible that *here* and *now* LIFE is its greatest need and that the only way to obtain this life is by a return to that upper room of long ago? So we end with a question, as with a question we commenced. Since the world began it has been by the asking of questions that men have come to truth.

THE END.

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